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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXVI

SEPTEMBER, 1908

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CONTENTS

The Gorgeous Isle	Gertrude Atherton	1
The Courage of Kittie	Lillian Bell	33
The Incarnation	Allan Updegraff	42
The Golden Lie	Helen Frances Huntington	43
Henri Murger	Beatrice Demarest Lloyd	51
The Better Right	Johnson Morton	52
Awakening	Joseph I. C. Clarke	61
Letters to a Creditor	Arthur Judd Ryan	62
Particular Parmalee	Mrs. Luther Harris	65
Poverty	Aloysius Coll	85
One Word More	Grace Lewis Henley	86
The Caravan	Clinton Scollard	91
The Celestial Schoolmaster	Marguerite Tracy	92
To Francis Thomson	Thomas Walsh	99
Presence of Mind	Harry Graham	100
Devotion	Archibald Sullivan	101
One Saturday in August	Vanderheyden Fyles	102
The Laughing Devil	Marion Hill	112
Requiescat	Elsa Barker	118
La Lumière	Michel Provins	119
Only a Boy	John Kendrick Bangs	123
Wallace and a Lorelei	Harry James Smith	124
The Ghosts	Elizabeth Daly	131
Long Distance, a Monologue	Blanche Goodman	136
The Woman in the Case	Christian Reid	137
The Fidelity of Fifi	Katharine Metcalf Roof	147
The Mask	Edward Wilbur Mason	152
Toodles	Ethel Watts Mumford Grant	153

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THE GORGEOUS ISLE

By Gertrude Atherton

BATH HOUSE, the most ambitious structure ever erected in the West Indies, and perhaps the most beautiful hotel the world has ever seen, was the popular winter refuge of English people of fashion in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. This immense, irregular pile of masonry stood on a terraced eminence rising from the flat border of Nevis—a volcano whose fires had migrated to less fortunate isles—which contained some fifty square miles of soil that yielded every luxury of the Antilles. There was game in the jungles, fish in the sea, did the men desire sport; there were groves of palm and cocoanut for picnics, a town like a bazar, a drive of twenty-four miles round the base of the ever-beautiful, ever-changing mountain; and a sloop always ready to convey the guests to St. Kitts, Montserrat, or Antigua, where they were sure of entertainment from the hospitable planters. There were sea baths and sulphur baths; above all, the air was light and stimulating on the hottest days, for the trade winds rarely deserted Nevis and St. Kitts, no matter what the fate of the rest of that blooming archipelago.

Bath House was surrounded by wide gardens of tropical trees, ferns and flowers of gray and other very delicate hues. Its several terraces flamed with color, as well as its numerous little balconies and galleries and the flat surfaces of the roof: the whole effect being that of an Eastern palace with hanging gardens, a vast pleasure-house, designed for some extravagant and voluptuous potentate. Anything less like an hotel had never been erected; and the interior, with its lofty

pillared rooms, its costly mahogany furniture, its panels and hangings of rich brocades, the thick rugs on the polished floors, if more European than Oriental, equally resembled a palace; an effect in no wise diminished by the brilliant plumage of the guests. If the climate compelled them to forswear velvet and satin, their muslins were from Bengal and their silks from Benares; and as the daughters of the planters emulated these birds of fashion in all things, Nevis in winter would have been independent of its gorgeous birds and flowers: the bonnets were miracles of posies and plumes, and the crinoline set off the costly materials, the flounces and fringes, the streamers and rosettes, the frills of lace old and new. And as the English creoles, with their skin like porcelain and their small, dainty figures, imitated their more rosy and well-grown sisters of the North, the handsome, strapping, colored wenches copied their island betters, in materials which if flimsy were no less bright; so it is no matter for wonder that the young bloods came from London to admire and loiter and flirt in an enchanted clime that seemed made for naught else, that the sons of the planters sent to London for their own finery, and the young colored bucks strutted about like peacocks on such days as they were not grinding cane or serving the reckless guests of Bath House in the shops of Charlestown.

That was the heyday of Nevis, a time of luxury and splendor and gaiety unknown on even the most fertile of the other islands, for none other was ever bold enough to venture such an hotel, and if the bold adventurer came to

grief, as was inevitable, still all honor to him for his spirit, and the brief glory he gave to the loveliest island of the Caribbees.

II

WHEN Anne Percy smiled her mouth looked ripe and eager for pleasure, her eyes sparkled with youth and gaiety, but when shy or thoughtful or impatient her mouth was too large and closely set, her low, thick brows made her eyes look sullen and opaque; their blue too dark even for beauty. It was a day when "penciled" eyebrows inspired the sonnet, when mouths were rosebuds, or should be for fashion's sake, when forms were slight and languid and a freckle was a blemish on the pink-and-white complexions of England's high-born maidens. Anne was tanned by the winds of moor and sea, she had a superb, majestic figure, and strode, when she took her exercise, in a thoroughly unladylike manner. She had not an attribute, not even an affectation, in common with the beauties of Bath House; and the reigning novelists of the day, Disraeli, Bulwer, Dickens, Lady Blessington, Mrs. Norton, would never have modeled a heroine of romance on her. There were plenty of fine women in England even then, but they were not in fashion, and when fate took them to court they soon learned to reduce their proportions, mince their gait, and bleach their complexions.

But Anne had not yet been at court and had arrived that day at Bath House. She drew down her heavy brows and looked as haughty as she felt shy and impatient, staring at the dark oblongs of open window, beyond which, effaced by the glare about her, was the warm, perfumed tropic night. But in the early Victorian era it would not have been thought becoming for a girl to step out upon a terrace alone, nor, indeed, to leave the wing of her chaperon, save briefly for the dance. Anne did not dance, and had remained in the great saloon after dinner watching with deep interest, for a time, the groups of men

and women in evening dress, playing whist or loo, the affected young ladies and their gallants strolling in from the music-room to show themselves off in the long lane between the tables. But the sight, the most splendid she had ever seen, had palled, the glare of the innumerable candles, reflected in the mirrors, and even the crimson brocade of the walls dazzled her eyes. She had her reasons, moreover, for wishing to be alone, a condition she had not realized since she had left England, now nearly a month since, and she fairly sprang to her feet as her aunt laid down her cards and signified that it was her pleasure to retire. Anne rearranged Mrs. Nunn's lace shawl, which had fallen to her waist in the ardor of the game, gathered up her fan, smelling-salts and winnings, then, with a slight drop in her spirit, steeled herself to walk the great length of the saloon to the thrice blessed exit. Mrs. Nunn, who had been a beauty, and always a woman of fashion, sailed along like a light sloop on a mild afternoon, her curves of time and crinoline not unlike sails filled by a gentle breeze; affectedly unconscious, but quite aware that many a card was laid down as she rustled by, and that all the winter world of Nevis already knew that the fashionable Mrs. Nunn, sister of one of the ladies of the bed-chamber, had arrived by the afternoon packet, and eagerly anticipated the intimate bits of court gossip with which she might condescend to regale them.

But Miss Percy knew naught of courts and little of drawing-rooms, and although pride held up her chin, and she tried to reflect that the moors had given her a finer, freer carriage than any of these languishing girls could boast, she followed her imposing chaperon with a furious beating of the heart; a condition which gave her, as the elegant Miss Bargarny remarked to the elegant Mr. Abergenny, the color of a milkmaid. But although the blood of the girl bred in a remote corner of England was warm and rich in her veins, and her skin was tanned, it would take more than color to coarsen her features, and

perhaps it was the straight nose of the Percys which enabled her to step calmly along the wake of her aunt while wishing that she might fly through one of the windows. (A good nose is the backbone of moral fortitude.) Although there were arches leading into drawing-rooms and morning-rooms, there was but one exit to the staircase, and in spite of the grandeur and the masses of palms and tropic flowers everywhere, the hotel had ceased to look like a fairy palace to the girl who had only paused long enough in her journey from her old manor to furnish her wardrobe in the darkest and dirtiest of winter cities. She had felt like the enchanted princess in the fairy tale for a few hours, but now she longed for nothing but her balcony upstairs.

She had begun to wonder if she might beg her aunt to accelerate her ladylike gait, when, to her horror, Mrs. Nunn was signaled by an acquaintance, as yet unseen, and promptly sat down at her table, announcing that she tarried but a moment. There was no other vacant chair; all near by were occupied by dames as imposing as Mrs. Nunn or by elderly gentlemen who bent the more attentively over their cards. There was nothing for Anne to do but draw herself up to her full height and look quite indifferent to being the only woman in the room to stand and invite the critical eye. In the early forties "young females" were expected to be retiring, modest, and although they were as often not by the grace of that human nature which has changed little in its progress down the centuries, they maintained a decent pretense. There were a number of belles in the room, with their attendant swains, and no doubt each thought herself a great beauty; but not one of them would have stood up alone in the central promenade of Bath House. Several of the men stared in disapproval, which emboldened their fair partners to make disparaging remarks, until it was observed that Lord Hunsdon, the greatest *parti* in the matrimonial market, had gone in search of a chair.

Anne longed to fold the arms she

knew not what to do with, but apprehending open laughter, held them rigidly to her sides, shooting anxious glances at the opposite mirror. She encountered a battery of eyes. At the same time she heard a suppressed titter. It was only by an effort of will that she refrained from running out of the room, and she felt as if she had been dipped in the hot springs of Nevis. It was at this agonizing moment that the amiable Lord Hunsdon presented the chair, with the murmured hope that he was not taking a liberty and that she recalled his having had the good fortune to be presented to her by his friend, Mrs. Nunn, earlier in the day. Anne, muttering her gratitude, accepted the chair without looking at him, although after he had retired her conscience smote her and she would have made an effort to be agreeable had he lingered. But immediately she caught the drift of a dialogue at a neighboring table, where the play had stopped, that had beaten faintly upon her ears before she sank out of sight; and in a moment she was conscious of nothing else.

"My son insists that it is my duty to help him, and I am inclined to agree with him," a clear, decided voice announced. "And after all, he is a gentleman, to say nothing of the fact that time was when he had to rid himself from the importunities of Bath House. But since that unhappy affair—I fear our sex had much to answer for—but he had suffered enough—"

"No doubt!" broke in a caustic voice, "but that is hardly the point. He has taken to ways of relieving his sufferings which make him quite unfit for decent society—"

"He can be reformed."

"Fiddlesticks! No one ever reforms. He merely changes his vice. And *hel!* Mr. Mortlake, who is fond of what he calls the picturesqueness of Charlestown by night, has seen him—well, it is enough that I should have heard. You have been too intimate with the little Queen lately. You never could stand it! Suffice it to say that brandy, or rum, or whatever he takes by the barrel, makes a madman of him."

"I have heard these stories, but I also know that he only drinks by fits and starts—"

"Worse and worse."

"Well!" in tones of great decision, "since a woman, and a woman of our own class, ruined him, Constance Mortlake, I believe it to be the duty of our sex and rank to redeem him. Do you," with high and increasing impatience, "realize that the man is a genius, the poet of the age?"

"Haven't I always doted on poetry since I was in love with Byron? But we can buy this young man's poetry for a guinea a volume—ten guineas for special editions at Christmas. I hear that Lady Blessington paid him a hundred pounds for three pages in last year's 'Book of Beauty.' I am glad he is in no danger of starving, and am quite willing to do my little share toward keeping him off the parish; but I prefer to enjoy his genius without being inflicted by the horrid tenement in which that genius has taken up its abode. Most indiscriminating faculty genius seems to be. Besides I have no respect for a man who lets his life be ruined by a woman. Heavens! supposing we— we women—"

"You can't have everything, and a man who can write like Byam Warner—"

"Don't believe you ever read a line of him. What on earth has a leader of ton to do with poetry, unless, to be sure, to read up a bit before caging the lion for a dinner where everybody will bore the poor wretch to death by quoting his worst lines at him. As for Warner there is no question that he writes even better than before he went to the dogs, and that, to my mind, is proof that he holds his gifts in fief from the devil, not from Almighty God—"

"Out upon you for a bigot! I should think you had lived in this world long enough—"

"Was there ever on this earth a more virtuous court than our young Queen's, Maria Hunsdon?"

"It is too good to last. And it is not so long ago—"

"Let us be permitted to forget the

court of that iniquitous man"—Anne could see a large-veined hand wave in the direction of a long portrait of George IV—"since we are mercifully and at last permitted so to do. Besides," changing the subject hastily, "I believe in predestination. You forget that although married these thousand years to an Englishman, I am a Scot by birth—"

But Anne heard no more, although her ears were thirsty. Mrs. Nunn brought her amiable nothings to a close, and a moment later they were ascending the great staircase, where the pretty little Queen and her stately husband smiled alike on the just and the unjust.

Mrs. Nunn entered Anne's room before passing on to her own. As hostess to her young relative whose income would not have permitted her to visit this most fashionable of winter cities uninvited, it behooved her to see that the guest lacked no comfort. She was a selfish old woman, but she rarely forgot her manners.

"These colored servants are so inefficient," she remarked as she peered into the water-jars and shook the mosquito netting. "This is my third visit here, so they are as disposed to respect my orders as their limited intelligence and careless habits will permit. I should always advise you to look in and under the bed—not for bad characters, but for caterpillars as long as your two hands, to say nothing of ants. There are no snakes on the island, but I believe land crabs have been seen on the stairs, and I am sure I never should recover if I got into bed with one. The maid will bring your coffee about six. I shall not appear till the half-after-nine breakfast."

"Then you will not mind if I go out for a walk?"

"Dear me, no. This is not London. But of course you will not permit a gentleman to attend you."

"As I do not know any—"

"But you will," said Mrs. Nunn amiably. "You are handsome, my dear, if not quite *à la mode*. I am glad you must wear white in this climate. It becomes you far better than black. Good night."

She was gone at last. Anne locked the door that she might know to the full the joy of being alone. She shook down her hair impatiently. In spite of her twenty-two years, she had worn it in pendent braids, save at the dinner hour, until her capture by Mrs. Nunn. It was rich, heavy dark hair, bright with much gold, worn in a bunch of curls on either side of the face and coiled low on the neck. Anne made a little face at herself in the glass. She knew that she possessed a noble, straight, full figure, but she saw no beauty in the sunburnt skin, the square jaw, the eyebrows as wide as her finger. Her mouth was also too large, her eyelashes too short. She had her ideals of beauty, and, having read many romances, they were the conventional ideals of the day. She smiled at her aunt's hint that she might find favor in the eyes of the beaux of Bath House. She knew nothing of the jargon of "the world," nothing of men. Nor did she desire knowledge of either. Even had her father shown any disposition to part with his only companion, she would have refused Mrs. Nunn's invitations to pass a season in London, for she lived an inner life which gave her an increasing distaste for realities. It was before the day when women, unimpelled by poverty or genius, flew to the ink-pot with their over-burdened imaginations. To write a book had never occurred to Anne, although she had led a lonely life in a forgotten corner of England where even her duties were few; the old servants knew their tasks before she was born, and her father preferred his pen and his laboratory to the society of his daughter. She must preside at his table, but between whiles she could spend her time on the sea or the moors, in the library or with her needlework—the era of governesses passing—as she listed.

And the wild North Sea, the moors and her books, above all, her dreams, had sufficed. Her vivid and intense imagination had translated her surroundings into the past, into far-off countries of which she knew as much as any traveler, oftener and still oftener to the

tropics, to this very island of Nevis. Then, suddenly, her father had died, leaving her until she reached the age of five-and-twenty, in the guardianship of his sister, Mrs. Nunn, who purposed making her favorite pilgrimage the following winter, insisted that Anne accompany her, and finally rented the manor over her head that she be forced to comply. The truth was she intended to marry the girl as soon as possible and had no mind that she should squander any more of her youth unseen by man. The shrewd old woman knew the value of that very ignorance of convention, that lack of feminine arts and wiles, so assiduously cultivated by young ladies in the matrimonial market, that suggestion of untrammelled nature so humbly deprecated by Anne. Moreover, concluded Mrs. Nunn, ruffling herself, she was a Percy and could not but look well-bred, no matter how ill she managed her hoop or curled her hair.

But although Mrs. Nunn could appraise the market value of a comely exterior and the more primitive charms of nature, of Anne Percy she knew nothing. She had puzzled for a moment at the vehement refusal of the young recluse to visit the West Indies, and even more at her ill-suppressed exultation when she realized that the migration was settled. But, she concluded, there was no accounting for the vagaries of the girl-brain, and dismissed the subject. Of the deep and passionate maturity of Anne Percy's brain, of the reasons for the alternate terror and delight at the prospect of visiting Nevis, she had not a suspicion. If she had she would have hastened to leave her to the roar of the North Sea and the wild voices of the moor.

III

ANNE, free of the tight gown in which she had encased her rebellious form for the benefit of the fine folk of Bath House, wrapped herself in a long, black mantle, blew down the curving glass globes that protected the candles from draught and insects, and stepped

out upon the balcony. She even closed the window behind her; and then at last she felt that she was indeed on Nevis—and alone. Before her rose the dark cone of the old volcano, its graceful sweep dim against the background of stars; and the white cloud that ever floated about its summit like the ghosts of dead fires was crawling down the slopes to the little town at its base. From this small but teeming capital came fitful sounds of music and of less decorous revelry, and its lights seemed to flit through the groves of palm and cocoanut trees, gently moving in the night breeze.

Below the hotel no man stirred. Anne stood with suspended breath and half-closed eyes. At this end of the island it was as still as death and almost as dark. There was no moon, and the great crystal stars barely defined the mountain and the tall, slender shafts and high verdure of the royal palm. Far away she saw a double row of lights on St. Kitts, the open windows doubtless of Government House in the capital, Basseterre, where a ball that had taken half the guests of Bath House was in progress.

In a few moments she became aware of other impressions besides the silence and the dark. The air was so warm, so caressing, so soft, that she swayed slightly as if to meet it. The deep, delicious perfumes of tropical blooms, even of tree and shrub, would have been overpowering had it not been for the lightness of the air and the constant though gentle wind. Bred upon harsh, salt winds, living a life of Spartan simplicity, where the sprigs of lavender in the linen closet wafted all she knew of scent to her eager nostrils, this first moment of tropical pleasure confused itself with the dreams of years, and she hardly dared open her eyes lest Nevis vanish and she find herself striding over the moor, her head down, her hands clutching her cape, while the North Sea thundered in her ears.

She lifted her head suddenly, straining her own throat. A bird poured forth a flood of melody that seemed to give voice to the perfumes and the rich

beauty of the night, without troubling the silence. She had read of this "nightingale of a tropic noon," but had not imagined that a small, brown bird, bred below the equator, could rival in power and dulcet tones the great songster of the North. But it sang as if its throat had the compass of a Mario's, and in a moment another Philomel pealed forth his desire, then another, and another, until the whole island seemed to swirl in a musical tide. Anne, with a sudden unconscious gesture, opened her arms and flung them out, as if to embrace and hold all the enchantment of a Southern night before it fled; and for the first time in her life she found that realities could give the spirit a deep, intoxicating draught.

The nightingales trilled into silence. The last sweet note seemed to drift out over the water, and then Anne heard another sound, the deep, low murmur of the Caribbean Sea. Her mind swung to Byam Warner, to the extraordinary poem, which ten years ago had made his fame, and interpreted this unceasing melancholy of the sea's chant into a dirge over the buried continent and its fate. With the passionate energy of youthful genius abandoning itself to the ecstasies of imagination, he had sung the lament of Atlantis, compelled the blue sepulchre to recede, and led a prosaic but dazzled world through cities of such beauty and splendor, such pleasant gardens and opulent wilds as the rest of the earth had never dreamed of. He peopled it still with an arrogant and wanton race, masters of the lore and the arts that had gone with them, awaiting the great day when the enchantment should lift and the most princely continent earth has borne should rise once more to the surface of the sea, lifting these jeweled islands, her mountain-peaks, high among the clouds.

It had been Byam Warner's first epic poem, and although he had won the critical public with his songs of the Caribbean Sea and of Nevis, the island of his birth, it was this remarkable achievement, white-hot from first to last with poetic fire, replete with fascinating pic-

tures and living tragedy, that gave him as wide a popularity as any novelist of the day. He had visited London immediately after, and, in spite of some good folk who thought his poem shockingly immoral, was the lion of the season—and a favorite at court. But he had soon wearied of London, and although he had returned several times with increasing fame he had always left as abruptly, declaring he could write nowhere above the equator; and, notwithstanding revels where he shone far more brilliantly than when in society, where indeed he was shy and silent, that he cared for nothing else.

Little gossip had come to Warkworth Manor, but Anne had read "The Blue Sepulchre" when she was seventeen, and after that her allowance went for his books. When a new volume appeared it was an event in her life comparable only to marriage or birth in the lives of other women. She abandoned her soul to this young magician of Nevis; her imagination, almost as powerful as his own, gave her his living presence more bountifully than the real man, cursed with mortal disenchantments, companioned her. So strong was her power of realization that there were hours when she believed that her thoughts girdled the globe and drew his own into her mental heaven. In more practical hours, when tramping the moor or sailing her boat, she dismissed this hope of intelligent response, inferring, somewhat grimly, that the young, handsome and popular poet had excited ardor in many a female breast besides her own. Nevertheless, she permitted herself to return again and again to the belief that he loved her and dreamed of her; and certainly one of his most poignant sonnets had been addressed to the unknown mate whom he had sought in vain.

Nor had he married. She had heard and read references to his increasing dissipation, caused by an unhappy love affair, but his work, instead of degenerating with his morals, showed increasing power and beauty. The fire burned at times with so intense a radiance that it would seem to have consumed his

early voluptuousness, while decimating neither his human nor his spiritual passion. Each new volume sold many editions. The critics declared that his lyrics were the finest of his generation, and vowed the time could not be far off when he would unite the imaginative energy of his first long poems with the nightingale quality of his later, and produce one of the greatest poetical dramas in the language. But the man had been cast into outer darkness. Society had dropped him, and the young Queen would not permit his name to be mentioned in her presence. That gentle spirit, the Countess of Blessington, indifferent to the world that shut its door in her own face, alone received him in what was still the most brilliant *salon* in England. But even Anne knew that during a recent visit to London, when a few faithful and distinguished men, including Count D'Orsay, Disraeli, Barry Cornwall, Monckton Milnes and Crabbe Robinson, had given him a banquet at the Travelers' Club, he had become so disgracefully drunk that when he left England two days later, announcing his intention never to return, not one of those long-suffering gentlemen had appeared at the dock to bid him farewell.

But Anne heard few of these horrid stories in detail, and her imagination made no effort to supply the lack. Her attitude was curiously indifferent. She had never seen his picture. He dwelt with her in the realm of fancy, a creation of her own; and in spite of the teeming incidents of that mental life, her common sense had assured her long since that they would never meet, that with the real Byam Warner she had naught to do. Her father had been forty-five when he was taken off by a mislaid gas in his laboratory; she had expected to be still his silent companion when herself was long past that age—an age for caps and knitting-needles and memories laid away in jars of old rose leaves.

It is possible that had Mrs. Nunn not succeeded in letting Warkworth Manor she never would have uprooted her niece, who face to face with the prospect of Nevis realized that she

wished for nothing so little as to meet Byam Warner, realized that the end of dreams would be the finish of the best in life. But circumstances were too strong for Anne, and she found herself in London fitting on excessively smart and uncomfortable gowns, submitting to have her side locks cut short and curled according to the latest mode, and even to wear a fillet, which scraped her hitherto untrammelled brow.

She had little time to think about Byam Warner, but when the memory of him shortened her breath she hastily assured herself that she was unlikely to meet an outcast even on an island, that she should not know him if she did, and that Bath House, whose doors were closed upon him, was a world in itself. And she should see Nevis, which had been as much her home as Warkworth Manor, see those glowing bits of a vanished paradise. There are certain people born for the tropics, even though bred within the empire of the midnight sun, even when accident has given their imagination no such impulse as Anne Percy's had received from the works of Byam Warner. Mind and body respond the moment they enter that mysterious belt which divides the moderate zones, upon whose threshold the spirit of worldliness sinks inert, and within whose charmed circle the principle of life is king. Those of the North with the call of the tropics in their blood have never a moment of strangeness; they are content at home.

The pauses at the still more southern islands on the way up from Barbadoes had been brief, but Anne had had glimpses of great fields of cane, set with the stately homes of planters, the grace of palm-fringed shores and silver sands: the awful majesty of volcanic islands, torn and racked by earthquake, eaten by fire, sometimes rising so abruptly from the sea as to imply a second half split to its base and hurled to the depths. But although there had been much to delight and awe, the wine in her cup had not risen to the brim until she came in sight of Nevis, whose perfection of form and color, added to the interest her gifted and unhappy

son had inspired, made her seem to eager, romantic eyes the incarnation of all the loveliness of all the tropics. Tonight Anne could forget even Byam Warner, who indeed had never seemed so far away, and she only went within when the cloud rolled down Nevis and enveloped her, as if in rebuke of those that would gaze upon her beauty too long.

Anne started from the sound, unhaunted sleep of youth conscious that someone had entered her room and stood by her bed. It proved to be a grinning, barefooted colored maid with coffee, rolls, and a plate of luscious fruit. Her untuned ear could make little of the girl's voluble replies to her questions, for the West Indian negroes used one gender only, and made a limited vocabulary cover all demands. But she gathered that it was about half-past five o'clock, and that the loud bell ringing in the distance informed the world of Nevis that it was market-day in Charlestown.

She had been shown the baths the day before and ran down stairs to the great stone tanks, enjoyed her swim in the sea water quite alone, and returned to her room happy and normal, not a dream lingering in her brain. As she dressed herself she longed for one of those old frocks in which she had taken comfort at Warkworth, but even had not all her ancient wardrobe been diplomatically presented by Mrs. Nunn to the servants of their London lodging, she knew that it was due her aunt that she present herself at breakfast attired as a young lady of the first fashion. She therefore accommodated herself to a white Indian muslin ruffled to the waist and sweeping the ground all round. The bodice was long and tight, exposing the neck, which Anne covered with a white silk scarf. She put on her second best bonnet, trimmed with lilac flowers instead of feathers, the scoop being filled with blonde and mull, and tied under the chin with lilac ribbons. Her waist, encircled with a lilac sash of soft India silk, looked no more than eighteen inches round, and she surveyed herself with some complacency,

feeling even reconciled to the curls, as they modified the severity of her brow and profile, thus bringing both into a closer harmony with her full mouth and throat.

"But what's the use," she thought, with a whimsical sigh. "I never mean to marry, so men cannot interest me, and it would be the very irony of fate to make a favorable impression on a poet we wot of. So, it all comes to this: I look my best to gratify the vanity of my aunt. Well, let it pass."

She drew on her gloves and ran down stairs, meeting no one. As she left the hotel and stood for a few moments on the upper terrace she forgot the discomforts of fashion. The packet had arrived late in the afternoon, there had been too much bustle to admit of observing the island in detail, even had the hour been favorable, but this morning it burst upon her in all its beauty.

The mountain, bordered with a strip of silver sands and trimmed with lofty palms, rose in melting curves to the height of three thousand feet and more, and although the most majestic of the Caribbees, there was nothing on any part of it to inspire either terror or misgiving. The exceeding grace of the long, sweeping curves was enhanced by silvery groves of lime trees and fields of yellow cane. Green as Spring earlier in the winter, at this season of harvest Nevis looked like a gold mine turned wrong side out. The "Great Houses," set in groves of palm and cocoanut, and approached by avenues of tropical trees mixed with red and white cedars, the spires of churches rising from romantic nooks, their heavy tombs lost in a tangle of low, feathery palms, gave the human note, without which the most resplendent verdure must pall in time; and yet seemed indestructibly a part of that jeweled scene. High above, where cultivation ceased, a deep collar of ever-green trees encircled the cone, its harsh, stiff outlines in no wise softened by the white cloud hovering above the summit. Charlestown spread along the shore of a curving bay, its many fine buildings and infinite number of huckster shops, its stately houses and negro

village, alike shaded by immense banana trees, the loftier cocoanut and every variety of palm.

Anne, as she gazed, concluded that if choice were demanded, it must be given to the royal palm and the cane-fields. The former rose, a splendid silvery shaft, to a great height, where it spread out into a mass of long green blades shining like metal in the sun. But the cane-fields! They glittered a solid mass of gold on all visible curves of the mountain. When the dazzled eye, grown accustomed to the sight which no cloud in the deep blue tempered, separated it into parts, it was but to admire the more. The cane, nearly eight feet in height, waxed from gold to copper, where the long blade-like leaves rose waving from the stalk. From the centre of the tip shot out a silver wand supporting a plume of white feathers, shading into lilac. The whole island, rising abruptly out of the rich blue waters of the sea, looked like a colossal jewel that might once have graced the diadem of the buried continent.

The idea pleased Anne Percy, at all events, and she lingered a few moments half dazed by the beauty about her and wholly happy. And on the terraces and in the gardens were the flowers and shrubs of the tropics, whose perfumes were as sweet as their colors were unsurpassed; the flaming hydrangea, the rose-shaped Arabian jasmine, the pink plumbia, the bright yellow acacia, the scarlet trumpet flower, the purple and white convolvulus, the silvery white blossoms of the lime tree framed with dark green leaves.

Anne shook herself out of her dream, descended the terraces and walked down a narrow avenue of royal palms to the town. She could hear the "Oyez! Oyez!" of the criers announcing the wares brought in from the country, and, eager for the new picture, walked as rapidly as her fine frock would permit. She was obliged to hold up her long and voluminous skirts, and her sleeves were so tight that the effort cramped her arms. To stride after her usual fashion was impossible, and she

ambled along anathematizing fashion and resolved to buy some cotton in the town and privately make several short skirts in which she could enjoy the less frequented parts of Nevis while her aunt slept. Without realizing it, for nothing in her monotonous life had touched her latent characteristics, she was essentially a creature of action. Even her day-dreams had been energetic, and if they had filled her life it was because they had the field to themselves. In earlier centuries she would have defended one of the castles of her ancestors with as much efficiency and spirit as any man among them, and had she been born thirty years later she would certainly have entered one of the careers open to women, and filled her life with active accomplishment. But she knew little of female careers, save, to be sure, of those dedicated to fashion, which did not interest her; and less of self-analysis. But she felt and lived in the present moment intensely. For twenty-two years she had dwelt in the damp and windy North, and now the dream of those years was fulfilled and she was amidst the warmth and glow of the tropics. It was the greatest happiness that life had offered her and she abandoned herself to it headlong.

As she entered the capital she suddenly became aware that she was holding her skirts high over her hoop in a most unladylike manner. She blushed, shook them down, and assumed a carriage and gait which would have been approved by even the fastidious Mrs. Nunn. But she was no less interested in the animated scene about her. The long street winding from the Court House to the churchyard on the farther edge of the town was a mass of moving color and a babel of sound. The women, ranging from ebony through all the various shades of copper and olive to that repulsive white where the dark blood seems to flow just beneath the skin, and bedecked in all the violence of blues and greens, reds and yellows, some in country costume, their heads covered with kerchiefs, others in a travesty on the prevailing

fashion, stood in their shops or behind the long double row of temporary stalls, vociferating at the passers-by as they called attention to fowl, meats, hot soup, fruit, vegetables, wild birds, fish, cigars, sugar-cakes, castor-oil, cloth, handkerchiefs and wood. Many of the early buyers were negroes of the better class, others servants of the white planters, and of Bath House, come early to secure the best bargains. Anne was solicited incessantly, even her skirts being pulled, for since emancipation four years before the negro had lost his awe of a white skin. It was some time before she could separate the gibberish into words, but finally she made out: "Bargain! Bargain! Here's yo' fine cowfee! Here's yo' pickled peppers! Come see! Come see! Only come see! Make you buy. Want any jelly cocoanut? Any yams? Nice grenadilla. Make yo' mouth water. Lady! Lady! Buy here! Very cheap! Very nice! Real!"

Anne paused before a stall spread with cotton cloth and bought enough for several skirts, the result of her complaisance being a siege of itinerant vendors that nearly deafened her. The big women were literally covered with their young ("pic'nees"), who clung to their skirts, waists, hips, bosoms; and these mites, with the parrot proclivities of their years and race, added their shrill: "By'm, lady, by'm!"

The proprietor of the cloth volubly promised to deliver the purchase at Bath House and Anne fled down the street until she was stopped by a drove of sheep whose owner was crying: "Oyez! Oyez! Come to the shambles of Mr. Columbus Brown. Nice fat lambs and big fat sheep. Very cheap! Very cheap!"

Anne retreated into a shop of some depth to avoid the dust. When the drove had passed she was rescued by Lord Hunsdon, who lifted his broad panama without smiling. He was a very serious-looking young man, with round, staring, anxious blue eyes under pent white brows, an ascetic mouth and a benevolent dome. He was immaculate in white linen, and less pinched

about the waist than his fashionable contemporaries.

"I believe it is not considered quite *de rigueur* for young ladies and young gentlemen to walk unchaperoned," he said diffidently; "but in the circumstances I think I may come to your relief and escort you back to the hotel."

"Not yet, please." Anne emerged and walked rapidly toward the edge of the town. "I cannot go back and sit in the hotel till half-past nine. I am accustomed to a long walk before breakfast."

"But Mrs. Nunn—"

"She must get used to my tramps. I should fall ill if I gave them up. Indeed, she is sadly aware that I am no fine lady, and no doubt will shortly give me up. But if you are afraid of her, pray go back. I recall, she said I was not to be escorted—"

"If you are determined to go on I shall accompany you, particularly as I wish to talk to you on a subject of great importance. Have I your permission?"

Quite lacking in vanity or worldliness, it was impossible that he should be unaware of his importance as a young, wealthy and unmarried peer, and he shrewdly suspected that Mrs. Nunn would make an exception in his favor on market-day in Charlestown.

Anhe, wondering what he could have to say to her, led the way past the church to the open road that encircled the island. Then she moderated her pace and looked up at him from the deeps of her bonnet. Her gaze was cooler and more impersonal than he was wont to encounter, but it crossed his burdened mind that a blooming face, even if unfashionably sunburnt, and a supple, vigorous body were somewhat attractive after a surfeit of dolls with their languid, fine-lady airs and affectation of physical delicacy; which he, being no fool, suspected of covering fine appetites and stubborn selfishness. But while he was young enough to admire the fresh beauty of his companion, it was the strength and decision, the subtle suggestion of high-mindedness, in this young lady's aspect, which had led him to a resolution that he now pro-

ceeded to arrange in words as politic as might be.

"It may seem presumptuous to speak on so short an acquaintance—"

"Not after your rescue last night. I had like to have died of embarrassment. I am not accustomed to have half a room gazing at me."

"You will be," he said gallantly. "But it is kind of you to make it easier. This is it. I have been—am—very unhappy about a friend of mine here. Of course you know the work of one whom many believe to be our greatest poet—Byam Warner?"

Anne drew her breath in and her eyelashes together. "I have read his poems," she said shortly.

"I see! Like many others you cannot disassociate the genius from the man. Because a fatal weakness—"

"What have I said, pray, that you should jump to such a conclusion?" She had recovered her breath but not her poise. "No one could admire him more than I. About his private life I know little and care less. He lives on this island, does he not?"

"We shall pass his house presently, but God knows if he is in it."

"He is a West Indian, is he not?"

"A scion of two of its foremost families, whose distinction by no means began with their emigration to the Antilles. One of his ancestors, Sir Thomas Warner, colonized most of these islands for the crown—in the seventeenth century. A descendant living on Trinidad has in his possession the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to Essex—you recall my friend's poem and the magnificent invective put into the frantic Queen's mouth at the bedside of Lady Nottingham? The ring was presented to Sir Thomas by Charles I on the eve of his first expedition to these islands. The Byams are almost equally notable, descended as they are from the father of Anne Boleyn, Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond."

The spirit of British democracy still slept in the womb of the century, with board schools, the telegraph and the penny press, and the aristocrat frankly admitted his pride of birth and de-

manded a corresponding distinction in his friends.

"I hope I have not bored you," continued the young nobleman anxiously, "But I have given you some idea of Warner's pedigree that you may see for yourself that the theory of generations of gentle blood and breeding, combined with exceptional advantages, sometimes culminating in genius, finds its illustration in him. Also, alas! that such men are too often the prey of a highly wrought nervous system that coarser natures and duller brains are spared. When he was younger—I knew him at Cambridge—or, indeed, a few years since, he had not drained that system, his youthful vigor immediately rushing in to resupply exhausted conduits. But even earlier he was always disposed to drink more than was good for him, and when a wretched woman made ducks and drakes of his life some four or five years since, he became—well—I shall not go into details. This is his house. It has quite a history. Alexander Hamilton, an American statesman, was born in it. Have you ever heard of him?"

"No—yes, of course I have read Warner's beautiful poem to his mother—and—I recall now—when one of the Hamiltons of Cambuskeith, a relative of my mother, visited us some years ago he talked of this Alexander Hamilton, a cousin of his father, who had distinguished himself in the United States of America."

Hunsdon nodded. "Great pity he did not carry his talents to England where they belonged. But this is the house where his parents lived when he was born. It used to be surrounded by a high wall, but I believe an earthquake flung that down before my friend's father bought the place. Warner was also born here."

The old house, a fine piece of masonry, was built about three sides of a court, in the centre of which was an immense banana tree whose lower branches, as close as a thatched roof, stretched but a few feet above the ground. The front wall contained a wide gateway, which was flanked by

two royal palms quite a hundred feet in height. The large unkempt garden at the side looked like a jungle in the hills, but was rich in color and perfume. The gates were open and they could see the slatternly negro servants moving languidly about the rooms on the ground floor, while two slept under the banana tree. A gallery traversed the second story, its pillars covered with dusty vines. All of the rooms of this story evidently opened upon the gallery, but every door was closed. The general air of neglect and decay was more pathetic to Anne, accustomed to exemplary housekeeping, than anything she had yet heard of the poet. He was uncomfortable and ill cared for, no doubt of that. The humming-birds were darting about like living bits of enamel set with jewels. The stately palms glittered like burnished metal. Before the house, on the deep blue waters of the bay, was a flotilla of white-sailed fishing-boats, and opposite was the green and gold mass of St. Kitts, an isolated mountain chain rising as mysteriously from the deep as the solitary cone of Nevis. She could conceive of no more inspiring spot for a poet, but she sighed again as she thought of the slatterns that miscarried for him.

Lord Hunsdon echoed her sigh as they walked on. "Even here he disappears for days at a time," he resumed. "Of course, he does not drink steadily. No man could do that in the tropics and live. But spirits make a madman of him, and even when sober he now shuns the vicinity of respectable people, knowing that they regard him as a pariah. Of course, his associates—well, I cannot go into particulars. For a time I did not believe these stories, for each year brought a volume from his pen, and showed a steady increase of power and a divine sense of beauty. Besides, I have been much absorbed these last few years. There seemed no loosening the hold of the Whigs upon the destinies of England and it was every patriot's duty to work with all his strength. You followed, of course, the tremendous battle that ended in last year's victory. I was almost worn out

with the struggle, and when I found that these stories about Warner were persistent I came out to investigate for myself. Alas! I had not heard the half. I spent three months with him in that house. I used every argument, every more subtle method I could command, to bring him to see the folly and the wickedness of his course. I might as well have addressed the hurricane. He did not even hate life. He was merely sick of it. He was happy only when at work upon a new poem—intoxicated, of course. When it was over he went upon a horrible bout and then sank into an apathy from which no art of mine could rouse him; although I am bound to add, in justice to one of the gentlest and most courteous souls I have ever known, his civility as a host never deserted him. I was, alas! obliged to return to England with nothing accomplished, but I have come this year with quite another plan. Will you listen to it, Miss Percy?"

"I am vastly interested." But she had little hope, and could well conceive that three months of this good young man might have confirmed the poet in his desire for oblivion.

"I persuaded my mother to come with me, although without avowing my object. I merely expatiated upon the beauty and salubrity of Nevis, and the elegant comforts of Bath House. Women often demand much subtlety in the handling. We arrived by the packet that preceded yours—two weeks ago, but I only yesterday broached my plan to her; she stood the trip so ill, and then seemed to find so much delight in long gossips with her old friends—a luxury denied her at home, where politics and society absorb her. But yesterday I had a talk with her, and this is my plan—that she should persuade herself and a number of the other ladies that it is their duty to restore to Warner his lost self-respect. For that I believe to be the root of the trouble, not any real inclination to dissipation and low society. This restoration can be accomplished only by making him believe that people of the highest respectability and fashion desire,

may, demand, his company. As my mother knew him well in England it will be quite natural she should write him a note asking him to take a dish of tea with her and complimenting his latest volume—I brought it with me. If he hesitates, as he well may do, she can call upon him with me, and, while ignoring the cause, vow he has been a recluse long enough, and that the ladies of Bath House are determined to have much of him. Such a course must succeed, for, naturally the most refined of men, he must long bitterly, when himself, for the society of his own kind. Then, when the ice is broken, we will ask others to meet him—"

"And has your mother consented?"

"Practically. I have no doubt that she will. She is a woman who needs a cause for her energies, and she never had a better one, not even the restoration of the Tories and Sir Robert."

"And you wish me to meet him?"

"Particularly, dear Miss Percy. I feel sure he would not care for any of these other young ladies. I happen to know what he thinks of young ladies. But you—you are so different! I do not wish to be a flatterer like so many of my shallow kind, but I am sure that he would appreciate the privilege of knowing you, would feel at his ease with you. But, of course, it all depends upon Mrs. Nunn. She may disapprove of your meeting one with so bad a name."

"Oh, she will follow Lady Hunsdon's cue, I fancy," said Anne, repressing a smile. "They all do, do they not, even here? I hope the poet does not wear Hyperion locks and a velvet smoking-jacket."

"He used to wear his hair, and dress, like any ordinary gentleman. But when I was here last year his wardrobe was in a shocking condition." The immaculate Englishman sighed deeply. "He is totally demoralized. Fortunately we are about the same figure. If all his clothes are gone to seed I can supply him till he can get a box out from England. For the matter of that there is a tailor here who makes admirable linen suits, and evening clothes not badly—"

"Is he very fascinating?" asked Anne ingenuously. She had long since recovered her poise. "My aunt has set her mind upon a high and mighty marriage for me, and might apprehend—"

"Fascinating! Apprehend! Great heavens! He was handsome once, *un beau garçon*—no doubt fascinating enough. But now! He is a ruin. No woman would look at him save in pity. But you must not think of that. It is his soul I would save—that I would have you help me to save—" with a glance into the glowing eyes which he thought remarkably like the blue of the Caribbean Sea, and eloquent of fearless youth. "His soul, Miss Percy. I cannot, will not, let that perish for want of enterprise."

"Nor his fountain of song dry up," replied Anne, whose practical side was uppermost. "He should write, and better and better, for twenty years to come."

"I should not care if he never wrote another line. I see a friend with the most beautiful nature I have ever known—he has the essence of the old saints and martyrs in him—going to ruin, wrecking all hopes of happiness, mortal and immortal. I must save him! I must save him!"

Anne glanced at the flushed face of her companion. His expression was almost fanatical, but as he turned suddenly and she met the intense little blue eyes, something flashed in them in no wise resembling fanaticism. She stiffened and replied coldly:

"You can count on me, of course. How could I refuse? But I have sensations that assure me it is close upon the breakfast hour. Shall we return?"

IV

AFTER breakfast Mrs. Nunn, pretending to saunter through the saloon and morning-rooms with Anne, introduced her naturally to a number of young people and finally left her with a group, returning to the more congenial society of Lady Hunsdon and Lady Constance Mortlake.

Anne, although shy and nervous, listened with much interest to the conversation of these young ladies so near her own age, while taking little part in it. The long windows opened upon an orchard of cocoanuts and bananas, grenadillas and shaddocks, oranges and pineapples, but in spite of the cool, refreshing air many of the girls were frankly lounging, as became the tropics, others were turning the leaves of the *Journal des Modes*, dabbling in water-colors, pensively frowning at an embroidery frame. Of the three young men present one was absorbed in the *Racing Calendar*, another was making himself generally agreeable, offering to read aloud or hold wool, and a third was flirting in a corner with the sparkling Miss Bargarny.

All acknowledged Mrs. Nunn's introductions with much propriety and little cordiality, for Anne was far too alert and robust, and uncompromising of eye to suit their modish taste. Nevertheless they asked her politely what she thought of Nevis, and seemed satisfied with her purposely conventional replies. Then the conversation drifted naturally to the light and dainty accomplishments for which all save herself professed a fondness: from thence to literature, where much languid admiration was expressed for Disraeli's "Venetia," a "performance of real elegance," and the latest achievement of the exciting Mr. G. P. R. James. Dickens wrote about people one really never had heard of, but Bulwer, of course, was one of themselves and the equal of Scott. In poetry the palm was tossed between Mrs. Hemans and L. E. L. on the one hand and that delightful, impossible American, Mr. Willis, and Barry Cornwall on the other. Young Tennyson received a few words of praise. When the talk naturally swung to Byam Warner, Anne eagerly attended. Had he made a deep personal impression upon any of these essentially feminine hearts? But the criticism of his poems was as languid, affected and indiscriminating as that of other work they had pretended to discuss. They admired him, oh, vastly!

He was amazing, a genius of the first water, the legitimate successor of Byron and Shelley, to say nothing of Keats; he might easily surpass them all in a few years. In short, they rehearsed all the stock phrases which the critics had set in motion years ago and had been drifting about ever since for the use of those unequal to the exertion of making their own opinions, or afraid of not thinking with the elect. Had Warner been falsely appraised by the higher powers their phrases would have been copied as faithfully; and Anne, with a movement of irrepressible impatience, rose, murmured an excuse, and joined her aunt.

Lady Hunsdon was a short, thin, trimly made woman, with small, hard, aquiline features, piercing eyes and a mien of so much graciousness that had she been a shade less well-bred she would have been patronizing. She looked younger than her years in spite of her little cap and the sedateness of attire then common to women past their youth. Lady Constance Mortlake had the high bust and stomach of advanced years; her flabby cheeks were streaked with good living. Her expression was shrewd and humorous, however, and her eyes were kinder than her tongue. Mrs. Nunn rose with vast ceremony and presented her niece to these two august dames, and as Anne courtesied, Lady Hunsdon said, smiling, but with a penetrating glance at the newcomer:

"My son tells me that he has acquainted you with our little plan to reform the poet—"

"Our?" interrupted Lady Constance. "None of mine. I sit and look on—as at any other doubtful experiment. I have no faith in the powers of a parcel of old women to rival the seductions of brandy and Canary, Madeira and rum."

"Parcel of old women! I shall ask the prettiest of the girls to hear him read his poems in my sitting-room."

"Even if their mammas dare not refuse you, I doubt if the girls brave the wrath of their gallants, who would never countenance their meeting such a reprobate as Byam Warner."

"You forget the power of curiosity."

"Well, they might gratify that by meeting him once, but they will sound the beaux first. What do you suppose they come here for? Much they care for the beauty of the tropics and sulphur baths. The tropics are wondrous fine for making idle young gentlemen come to the point, and there isn't a girl in Bath House who isn't on the catch. Those that have fortune want more, and most of them have too many brothers to think of marrying for love. Their genius for matrimony has made half the fame of Nevis, for they make Bath House so agreeable a place to run to from the fogs of London that more eligibles flock here every year. There isn't a disinterested girl in Bath House unless it be Mary Denbigh, who has two thousand a year, has been disappointed in love, and is twenty-nine and six months." She turned sharply to Anne and demanded:

"Have you come here after a husband?"

"If you will ask my aunt I fancy she will reply in the affirmative," said Anne mischievously.

Mrs. Nunn colored, and the others looked somewhat taken aback.

"That was not a very ladylike speech," said Mrs. Nunn severely. "Moreover," with great dignity, "I have found your society so agreeable, my dear, that I hope to enjoy it for several years to come."

Anne, quick in response, felt repentant and touched, but Lady Constance remarked drily:

"Prepare yourself for the worst, my dear Emily. I'll wager you this purse I'm netting that Miss Percy will have the first proposal of the season. She may differ from the prevailing mode in young ladies, but she was fashioned to be the mother of fine, healthy children; and young men, who are human and normal *au fond*, whatever their ridiculous affectations, will not be long in responding, whether they know what is the matter with them or not."

Anne blushed at this plain speaking, and Mrs. Nunn bridled. "I wish you would remember that young girls—"

"You told me yourself that she was

two-and-twenty. She ought to have three babies by this time. It is a shocking age for an unmarried female. You have not made up your mind to be an old maid, I suppose?" she queried, pushing up her spectacles and dropping her netting. "If so, I'll turn matchmaker myself. I should succeed far better than Emily Nunn, for I have married off five nieces of my own. Now don't say that you have. You look as if it were on the tip of your tongue. All girls say it when there is no man in sight. I shall hate you if you are not as little commonplace as you look."

Anne shrugged her shoulders and said nothing, while Lady Hunsdon remarked, with her peremptory smile (this was one of a well-known set): "We have wandered far from the subject of Mr. Warner. Not so far, either, for my son tells me, Miss Percy, that you have kindly consented to meet him—to help us, in fact. I hope you have no objections to bring forward, Emily. I am very much set upon this matter of reclaiming the poet. And as I can see that Miss Percy has independence of character, and as I feel sure that she has not come to Nevis on the catch, she can be of the greatest possible assistance to me. What Constance says of the other young ladies is only too true. They will pretend to comply, but gracefully evade any responsibility. I can count upon none of them except Mary Denbigh, and she is rather *passée*, poor thing—"

"*Passée*? At thirty? What do you expect? She looks like an elegiac figure weeping on a tombstone. I can't stand the sight of her. And it's all kept up to make herself interesting. Edwin Hay has been dead eleven years—"

"Never mind poor Mary. We all know she is your pet abomination—"

"She gives me a cramp in my spleen."

"Well, to return to Mr. Warner. Will you all meet him when I ask him to my sitting-room upstairs? Will you spread the news of his coming among the other guests? Hint that he has re-

formed? Excite in them a desire to meet the great man?"

She did not speak in a tone of appeal, and there was a mounting fire in her eye.

Lady Constance shrugged her shoulders. "You mean that you will cut us if we don't. I never quarrel in the tropics. Besides, I have buried too many of my old friends! I don't approve, but I shall be interested, and my morals are as pure and solid as my new teeth. If you can marry him to Mary Denbigh and leave her on the island—"

"And you, Emily?"

None had had more experience in yielding gracefully to social tyrants than Mrs. Nunn. She thought Maria Hunsdon mad to take up with a drunken poet, and could only be thankful that her charge was a sensible, commonplace girl with no romantic notions in her head. "I never think in the tropics, my dear Maria, and now that you are here to think for me, and provide a little variety, so much the better. What is your program?"

"To ask him first for tea in my sitting-room, then for dinner; then to organize picnics and take him with us on excursions. I shall frequently pick him up when I drive—in short before a fortnight has passed he will be a respectable member of society, and accepted as a matter of course."

"And what if he gets drunk?"

"That is what I purpose he shall not do. As soon as I know him well enough I shall talk to him like a mother."

"Better let Miss Percy talk to him like a sister. Well, regulate the universe to suit yourself. I hope you will not forget to order Nevis to have no earthquakes this winter, particularly while we are cooking our gouty old limbs in the hot springs. By the way, whom have you decreed James shall marry?"

"I should not think of interfering in such a matter." Lady Hunsdon spoke with her usual bland emphasis, but darted a keen glance at Anne. It was not disapproving, for Miss Percy's

descent was long, she liked the splendid vitality of the girl, and Hunsdon had riches of his own. But, far cleverer than Mrs. Nunn, she suspected depths which might have little in common with her son, and a will which might make a mother-in-law hate her. Lady Hunsdon loved peace, and wondered that anyone should question her rigid rules for enforcing it. But of Anne as a valuable coadjutor in the present instance there could be no doubt, and, to do her justice, she anticipated no danger in the meeting of a fine girl, full of eager interest in life, and the demoralized being her son so pathetically described. She was quite sincere in her desire to lift the gifted young man from his moral quagmire, but this new opportunity to exercise her power, almost moribund since her party was no longer in Opposition, was a stronger motive still.

When Anne was alone in her room she sat down and stared through the half-closed jealousies until the luncheon bell rang at two o'clock, forgetting to change her frock. But she could make little of the ferment in her mind, except that her mental companion, that arbitrary creation she had called Byam Warner, was gone forever. Even did she return to her northern home and dwell alone, his image would never return. She could not even now recall the lineaments of that immortal lover. The life of the imagination was past. Realities multiplied; no doubt she was converging swiftly upon one so hideous as to make her wish she had never been born. Any day she might be formally introduced over a dish of tea to a degraded, broken creature whom all the world despised as a man, and who, she would be forced to remind herself, was the author of the poems of Byam Warner. Byam, at least, had never been a common drunkard. Picturesque even in his dissipations, he had been a superb romantic figure to the last. But this man! She could hear the struggle and rattle of romance as it died within her. Oh, that she had never seen Nevis, that her father had lived, that she could have gone on!— Then a peremptory

thought asserted itself. The time was come for her to live. To dream for twenty-two years was enough. She must take up her part in life, grasp its realities, help others—if she could. She could not love this poor outcast, but were she offered a share in his redemption she should embrace the circumstance as a sacred duty.

In time, perhaps, she might even marry. That dreadful old woman was right, no doubt. It was her manifest destiny. Certainly she should like to have children and a fine establishment of her own. Lord Hunsdon was unacceptable, but doubtless a prepossessing suitor would arrive before long, and when he did she would marry him gladly and live rationally and dream no more. And when she reached this decision she wept, and could not go down to luncheon; but she did not retire from the mental step she had taken.

V

HER mind had time to recover its balance. It was a fortnight and more before she met Byam Warner. Lady Hunsdon, to her secret wrath and amazement, met defeat with the poet himself. He replied politely to her ladyship's flattering notes, but only to remind her that he was very busy, that he had been a recluse for some years, that he was too much out of health to be fit for the society of ladies. The estimable Hunsdon, after one fruitless interview, invariably found the poet from home when he called. The massa was up in the hills. He was on St. Kitts. He was visiting relatives on Antigua. Had he been in London he could not more successfully have protected himself. Lord Hunsdon was a man of stubborn purpose, but he could not search the closed rooms along the gallery.

But the poet's indifference to social patronage at least accomplished one of the objects upon which Lady Hunsdon had set her heart. The guests of Bath House, vaguely curious, or properly scandalized, at the first, soon became

quite feverish to meet the distinguished friend of Lord Hunsdon. So rapidly does a fashion, a fad, leap from bulb to blossom in idle minds, that before a fortnight was out even the young men were anxious to extend the hand of good-fellowship, while as for the young ladies, they dreamed of placing his reformation to their own private account, learned his less subtle poems by heart, and began to write him anonymous notes.

Meanwhile Anne, hoping that his purpose would prove of a consistency with his habits, and determined to dismiss him from her thoughts, found sufficient pleasure and distraction in her daily life. She made her short skirts—several hemmed strips gathered into a belt—and walked about the island in the early morning. The negroes singing in the golden cane-fields; the women walking along the white road with their swinging flanks, immense baskets poised on their heads, pic'nees trotting behind or clinging to their hips; the lonely, odorous, silent jungles in the high recesses; the cold fringe of forest close to the lost crater; the house in which Nelson courted and married his bride, and the church in which the marriage certificate is still kept; she visited them all and alone. In the afternoon she drove with her aunt, their phaeton one of a gay procession, stopping sometimes at one of the Great Houses, where she was taken by the young people out to the mill to see the grinding and partake of "sling"; home in the cool of the evening to dress for the long dinner and brilliant evening. She would not dance, but she made several friends among the young men, notably that accomplished lady-killer and *arbiter elegantiarum*, Mr. Abergenny, so prosilient in the London of his day; and found herself in a fair way to be disliked thoroughly by all the other young women save Lady Mary Denbigh; who, somewhat to her embarrassment, showed a distinct preference for her society, particularly when Lord Hunsdon was in attendance. The men she liked better than she had believed possible, estimating them by their suspiciously small

waists, their pinched feet, and hair so carefully curled and puffed out at the side; but although Lord Hunsdon's attentions were now unmistakable, she liked him none the better that she esteemed him the more, and was glad of the refuge the admiration of the other men afforded her.

And then, without any preliminary sign of capitulation, Byam Warner wrote to Lady Hunsdon announcing that he now felt sufficiently recovered to pay his devoirs to one who had been so kind, apologized for any apparent discourtesy, and asked permission to drink a dish of tea with her on the following evening.

Lady Hunsdon was quite carried out of herself by this victory, for there was a Lady Toppington at Bath House, whose husband was in the present Cabinet and a close friend of Peel. She had given the finest ball of the season to signalize the return of the Tories to power, and would have taken quick possession of the social reins had Lady Hunsdon laid them down for a moment. Politics enjoyed a rest on Nevis, but other interests loomed large in proportion, and the apparent defeat of the hitherto invulnerable leader of *ton* excited both joy and hope in the breasts of Lady Toppington and her little court. Now did Lady Hunsdon sweep rivals aside with her flexible eyebrows, and on the evening when she was able to announce her triumph she was besieged in her stately chair, not unlike a throne.

But she was deaf to hints and bolder hopes. She would not thrust a shy young man, long a hermit, into a miscellaneous company when he had come merely to drink tea with herself and son and a few intimate friends. Later, of course, they should all meet him, but they must possess their souls in patience. To this dictum they submitted as gracefully as possible, but they were not so much in awe of Lady Hunsdon as to forbear to peep from windows and sequestered nooks on the following evening at nine o'clock, when Byam Warner emerged from the palm avenue, ran hurriedly up the long flights

of steps between the terraces, and, escorted by Lord Hunsdon, who met him at the door, up to the suite of his hostess.

Anne was standing in the deep embrasure of the window when he entered the sitting-room, where she, in common with Lady Constance Mortlake, Lady Mary Denbigh, Mrs. Nunn and Miss Bargarny, who was a favorite of Lady Hunsdon and would take no denial, had been bidden to do honor to the poet. She heard Lady Hunsdon's dulcet, icy tones greet him and present him to her guests, the ceremonious responses of the ladies—but not a syllable from Warner—before she steeled herself to turn and walk forward. But the ordeal she had anticipated was still to face. Warner did not raise his eyes as her name was pronounced. He merely bowed mechanically and had the appearance of not having removed his gaze from the floor since he entered the room. He was deathly pale, and his lips were closely pressed as if to preserve their firmness. Anne, emboldened by a shyness greater than her own, and relieved of the immediate prospect of meeting his eyes, examined him curiously after he had taken a chair and the others were amiably covering his silence with their chatter. He had dressed himself in an old but immaculate white linen suit with a high collar and small necktie. It was evident that he had always been very thin, for his clothes, unassisted by stays, fitted without a wrinkle, although his shoulders were perhaps more bowed than when his tailor had measured him. His hair was properly cut and parted, but although he was still young, its black was bright with silver. His head and brow were nobly formed, his set features fine and sensitive, but his thin face was gray and lined. It was unmistakably the face of a dissipated man, but oddly enough the chin was not noticeably weak, and the ideality of the brow, and the delicacy of the nostril and upper lip were unaltered. Nevertheless, and in spite of the suggestion of ease which still lingered about his tall figure, there was something so abject

about his whole appearance, his painful self-consciousness at finding himself once more among people that had justly cast him out was so apparent that Anne longed for an excuse to bid him go forth and hide himself once more. But to dismiss him was the part of Lady Hunsdon, who had no intention of doing anything of the sort. It is doubtful if either she or any of the others saw aught in his bearing but the natural embarrassment of a shy man at finding himself once more within the enchanted circle. Lady Hunsdon expatiated upon the beauty of Nevis, long familiar to her through his works, vowed that she had come to the island only to see for herself how much he had exaggerated, but was quite vanquished and speechless. Not to have met her son's most valued friend would have blurred and flawed the wonderful experience. Warner bowed gravely once or twice, but did not raise his eyes, to Anne's continued relief: she dreaded what she must meet in them. If the rest of his face was a ruin, what sinks of iniquity, what wells of horror, must be those recording features? There were lines about them and not from laughter! He looked as if he had never smiled. She pitied him so deeply that she could have wept, for she had never seen an unhappier mortal; but she had no desire to approach him further.

Miss Bargarny poured the tea, and when she passed his cup roguishly quoted a couplet from one of his poems; lines that had no reference to tea—God knows, he had never written about tea—but which tripped from her tongue so gracefully that they had the effect of sounding apropos. He blushed slightly and bowed again; and shortly after, when all the cups had been handed about and he had drained his own, seemed to recover his poise, for he addressed a few remarks to Lady Hunsdon, at whose right he sat. Anne, who was seated some distance from the table, could not even hear his voice, but Lady Hunsdon received such as he ventured upon with so much *empressement* that he manifestly rose in courage; in a few moments he was extending his

attention to Lady Mary Denbigh, who leaned forward with an exalted expression shaded by ringlets, and raising her imperceptible bosom with an eloquent sigh. By this time Lord Hunsdon was talking into Anne's ear and she could hear nothing of the conversation opposite, although now and again she caught a syllable from a low, toneless voice. But his first agony was past as well as her own, and she endeavored to forget him in her swain's comments upon the political news arrived with the packet that afternoon. When tea was over and Miss Bargarny, who cultivated liveliness of manner, had engaged the poet in a discussion upon the relative merits of Shelley and Nathaniel P. Willis—astonishingly original on her part, mild to the outposts of indifference on his—Anne followed Hunsdon to the other side of the room to look over an album of his mother's, just unpacked. It contained calotypes of the most distinguished men and women of the day, and Anne, who had barely seen a daguerreotype before, and never a presentment of the famous people of her time, became so absorbed that she forgot the poet to whose spirit hers had been wedded these five years, and whose visible part had sickened the very depths of her being. Lord Hunsdon had the pleasure of watching her kindling eyes as he told her personal details of each of his friends, and when Anne cried out that she was living in a bit of contemporary history, he too flushed, and felt that his suit prospered. But Anne was thinking as little of him as of Warner, and so intent was she upon the ugly, striking physiognomy of the author of "*Venetia*," with his Byronic curls and flowing collar, that she was hardly aware that Lord Hunsdon's attentions had been claimed by his mother; who skilfully transferred him to the side of Lady Mary.

A moment later she turned abruptly and met the eyes of Warner. He was sitting apart, and he was staring at her. It was not meeting his eyes so suddenly that turned her hands to ice and made them shake as she returned to the album, but the eyes themselves that

looked out from the ruin of his face. She had expected them to be sneering, lascivious, bold, anything but what they were: the most spiritual and at the same time the most tormented eyes that had ever been set in the face of a mortal. She caught her breath. What could it mean? No man could live the life he had lived—Lady Mary, who had a fine turn for gossip, had told her all that Lord Hunsdon had left unsaid—and keep his soul unspotted. It was marvelous, incredible. She recalled confusedly something Hunsdon had said about his having a beautiful character—well, that was originally, not after years of degradation. Besides, Hunsdon was a fanatical enthusiast.

At this point she became aware that Warner was standing beside her, but as she glanced up in a surprise that restored her self-possession, he had averted his eyes and embarrassment had claimed him again. She was too much of a woman not to rush to the rescue.

"I have never seen anything so interesting!" she exclaimed with great animation; "I am sure you will agree with me, although, of course, you have met all these great people. Is not this process a vast improvement upon the daguerreotype? And I am told they expect to do better still. Have you read '*Venetia*'? Do you remember that Disraeli makes Lord Cadurcis—Byron—assert that Shakespeare did not write his own plays? Fancy!"

"I never for a moment supposed that he did," replied Warner, evidently grasping at a subject upon which he felt at home. "Nor did Byron. Nor, I fancy, will a good many others, when they begin to think for themselves—or study the Elizabethan era. I have never read any of Disraeli's novels. Do you think them worth reading?"

He was looking at her now, still with that expression of a saint at the stake, but obviously inattentive to her literary opinions. Before she could answer he said abruptly:

"What a fine walker you are! I have never seen a woman walk as you do. It is not the custom here, and even

in England the ladies seemed far too elegant to do more than stroll through a park."

"I am not at all elegant," replied Anne, smiling, "as my aunt will tell you. I had to make myself some short skirts, and I get up at unearthly hours to have my tramp and return in time to dress for breakfast. But I have never met you."

"I have passed you several times, but, of course, you did not notice me. I have a hut up in one of the jungles and I am always prowling about at that hour in the morning." He hesitated, drew in his breath audibly, and as he looked down again the color rose under his pallid, loose skin. "I came here today to meet you," he added.

For a moment Anne felt that she was going to faint. Good God! Had this dreary outcast found his way to her castles in Spain? Could he *know*? She was unable to articulate, and he went on.

"You must pardon me if that was too bold a thing to say—you are the last person to whom I would give offense! But you have seemed to me the very spirit of the fresh, robust North. I have fancied I could see the salt wind blowing about you. All the English creoles of this island are like porcelain. The fine ladies that come to Bath House take too much care of their complexions, doubtless of their pretty feet—they all want to be beauties rather than women. That is the reason you seem something of a goddess by contrast, and vastly refreshing to a West Indian."

Anne drew a long breath as he blundered through his explanation. She was relieved, but at the same time femininely conscious of disappointment. Nor was there sentiment in his low, monotonous voice. He paid but the homage of weary man to vital youth.

"I am unfashionably healthy," she said, hoping that her eyes danced with laughter at the idea of being likened to a goddess. She continued with great vivacity, "How relieved I am that you have never noticed the hang of my

morning skirts. Ah, that is because you are a poet. But I wish I could give you one-tenth of the pleasure, by my suggestion of the North, that I derive from your wonderful tropics. Don't fancy that I get up at five merely for the pleasure of exercise. My chief object is to enjoy your island for a bit while all the rest of the world is asleep. These last sixteen days have been the happiest of my life." She brought out the last words somewhat defiantly, but she met his gaze, still smiling.

"I am not surprised to learn that you are a poet. What else could be expected—once I learned to pay compliments gracefully, but if I have forgotten the art, I have not lost my power to admire and appreciate beauty in any form. It has given me the greatest pleasure I have known for years to watch you, and I thank you for coming to Nevis."

Anne by this time was accustomed to the high-flown compliments of polite society, but she could not doubt the sincerity of this man, who had no place in a world where idle flattery was the small coin of talk. She blushed slightly and changed the subject, and as he talked, less and less haltingly, of the traditions of Nevis, she watched his eyes, fascinated. They were not the eyes of mere youth, any more than of a man who had seen far too much of life. Neither upon closer inspection, were they the eyes of a saint or a martyr, although she could better understand Hunsdon's estimate by picturing him born three centuries earlier. But they were the eyes of the undying idealist, of the inner vision, of a mental and spiritual life apart from the frailties of the body. They seemed to look at her, intent as was his gaze, as from a vast distance, from heights which neither she nor all that respectable world that despised his poor shell could ever attain. With it all there was no hint of superciliousness: the eyes were too sad, too terribly wise in their own way for that; and his whole manner went far beyond modesty; it had all the pitiable self-consciousness of one who has fallen from the higher social

plane. No common man, no matter what his fame and offenses, could lose his self-respect as this poor gentleman had done. Anne, filled with a pity she had never known was in her, exerted herself to divert his mind from the gulf which had so long separated him from his class. She talked as she fancied other women must have talked to him when he visited London in the first flush of his youth and fame. She even began with "The Blue Sepulchre," which now no longer ranked with the best of his work, so far had he progressed beyond the unlicensed imagination of youth. She told him that she looked down from her balcony every morning expecting to see the domes and towers of ancient cities rise from the sea. And, alas! in the enthusiasm of her cause, before she could call a halt, she had told him all that his poetry had meant to her in her lonely life by the North Sea; in a few moments he was aware that she possessed every volume he had written, knew every line by heart; and although she caught herself up in time jealously to conceal the more portentous meanings it had held for her, he heard enough to make his eyes kindle at this delicious echo of his youth, coming from an innocent, lovely creature who had evidently heard little of his evil life.

"I knew that you came from the sea!" he exclaimed. "And the purple, rolling moors! How well I remember them, and longed to write of them. But only these latitudes drive my pen. Indeed, I once tried to write about the heather—the purple twilight—no figment of the poetical fancy, that. The atmosphere at that hour literally is purple."

"When it is purple! But you should see the moors in all their moods as I have done. I rarely missed a day in winter, no matter how wild—I have tramped half a day many a time. And I can assure you that the sea itself cannot look more wild, more terrifying—with the wrack driving overhead, and the rain falling in torrents, and the wind whistling and roaring, and rushing past you as if called by the sea to

some frightful tryst, some horrible orgy of the elements, and striving to tear you up and carry you with it. Still—still—perhaps it is as beautiful—then—in its way, as in its season of color and peace."

"Ah! I knew you would say that." He added in a moment: "You are the only person that has quoted my lines to me who has not embarrassed me painfully. For the moment I felt that you had written them, not I!"

"I often used to feel that I had; all, that is—" The magnet of danger to the curiosity in her feminine soul was irresistible. "All but your ode to the mate whom you never could find."

And then she turned cold, for she remembered the story of the woman who had been his ruin. But he did not pale nor shrink; he merely smiled and his eyes seemed to withdraw still farther away. "Ah! that woman of whom all poets dream. Perhaps we really find her as we invoke her for a bit with the pen." Then he broke off abruptly and looked hard at her, his eyes no longer absent. "You—you—" he began. "Ten years ago—" And then his face flushed so darkly that Anne laughed gaily to cover the cold and horror that gripped her once more.

"Ten years ago? I was only twelve! And now—I am made to feel every day that two-and-twenty is quite old. In three more years I shall be an orthodox old maid. All the women in Bath House intimate that I am already beyond the marriageable age."

"The men do not, I fancy!" The poet spoke with the energy of a man himself. "Besides, I looked—happened to look—through the window of the saloon one night and saw you talking to no less than four gallants."

Here she turned away in insufferable confusion, and he too seemed to realize that he had betrayed a deeper interest than he had intended. With a muttered *au revoir*, he left her, and when she finally turned her head he was gone. Miss Bargarny was exclaiming:

"Well, dear Lady Hunsdon, he was quite delightful, genteel, altogether the gentleman. Thank heaven, I never

heard all those naughty stories, so I can admire without stint. Did you notice, Mary, how pleased he was when I recited that couplet?"

"I saw that he was very much embarrassed," replied Lady Mary, who, for an elegiac figure, had a surprising reserve of human nature. "It was too soon to be personal with a poor man who has been out of the world so long. But I think he enjoyed himself after the first embarrassment wore off. I feel surer still," with an exalted expression turned suddenly upon Lord Hunsdon, "that we shall rescue him. We must have him here often, not lose a day of this precious time. Then we can leave Nevis without anxiety, or perhaps induce him to go with us." She reflected that were she mistress of Hunsdon Towers she should be quite willing to give the famous poet a turret and pass as his mundane redeemer.

Hunsdon moved toward her as if her enthusiasm were a magnet. "It has all exceeded my fondest hopes," he exclaimed. "He was quite like his old self before he left—"

"Thanks to Miss Percy," broke in a stridulous voice. "He was devoured with ennui, to say nothing of shyness, until he summoned up courage to talk to her, and then he seemed to me quite like any ordinary young spark. I don't know that he quite forgot to be a poet," she concluded with some gallantry, for she had taken a great fancy to Anne and was determined to marry her brilliantly, "but he certainly ceased for a few moments to look like a God-forsaken one. What were you talking about, my dear?"

"Dear Lady Constance— Oh, Nevis and his poetry, for the most part."

"I should think he would be sick of both subjects. Come now, be frank. Did not you get on the subject of your pretty self? I'll be bound he has an eye for a fine girl as well as the best of them. You make Mary and Lillian look like paper dolls."

"I do protest!" cried Miss Bargarny indignantly. "If he does it is practically because he is a—lives in the coun-

try himself. If he lived in London among people of the first fashion—"

"He'd admire her all the more. Look at the other beaux. Wait until Miss Percy is in the high tide of a London season. You forget that if girls are always on the catch men are always ready for a change."

Miss Bargarny's black eyes were in flames, but she dared not provoke that dreaded tongue further. She forced herself to smile as she turned to Anne, standing abashed during this discussion of herself, and longing to be alone with her chaotic thoughts. "Confess, dear Miss Percy, that you did not talk about yourself, but about that most fascinating of all subjects to man, *himself*. I believe you have the true instinct of the coquette, in spite of your great lack of experience, and that is a coquette's chiefest sugar-plum."

"I believe I did talk about himself— naturally, as I have always been a great admirer of his work, and the very inexperience you mention makes me seize upon such subjects as I know anything about."

Lady Mary went forward and put her arm about her new friend's waist. "Let us take a turn in the orchard before it is time to retire," she said. "I long to talk to you about our new acquaintance. Try to devise a plan to bring him here daily," she said over her shoulder to the complacent hostess; and to Lord Hunsdon, "Will you come for us in a quarter of an hour?"

It was only of late that Lady Mary had determined to lay away in lavender the luxury of sorrow. When a woman is thirty ambition looms as an excellent substitute for romance, and there had been unexpected opportunities to charm a wealthy peer during the past five weeks. She hated poetry and thought this poet a horror, but he was an excellent weapon in the siege of Hunsdon Towers. She was not jealous of Anne, for she divined that Hunsdon's suit, if suit it were, was hopeless, and believed that her new friend's good-nature would help her to win the prize of a dozen seasons. So she refreshed her complexion with buttermilk

and spirits of wine, and made love to Anne; who saw through her manoeuvres, but was quite willing to further them if it would save herself the ordeal of refusing Lord Hunsdon.

VI

ON the following evening there was so much more dancing than usual—a number of officers had come over from St. Kitts—that the saloon was deserted by the young people, and at the height of the impromptu ball Anne found herself alone near one of the open windows. The older people were intent upon cards. Anne, who had grown bolder since her first appearance in the world, now close upon three weeks ago, obeyed an impulse to step through the window, descended the terrace and walked along the beach. She could have gone to her room and found the solitude she craved, but she wanted movement, and the night was so beautiful that it called to her irresistibly. The moon was at the full, she could see the blue of the sea under its crystal flood. The blades of the palm-trees glittered like sinister weapons unsheathed. She could outline every leaf of palm, coconut, and banana that fringed the shore. The nightingales ceased their warbling and she heard that other and still more enchanting music of a tropic night, the tiny ringing of a million silver bells. What fairy-like creature of the insect world gave out this lovely music she was at no pains to discover. It was enough that it was, and she had leaned out of her window many a night and wondered why Byam Warner had never sung its music in his verse.

Byam Warner! How—how was she to think of him? Her overthrown ideals no longer even interested her, belonging as they did to some far-off time when she had not come herself to dream upon these ravishing shores. And now the surrender of the past three weeks had been far more rudely disturbed. Would even Nevis dominate again? Must not such a man, even in his ruin, cast his shadow over any

scene of which he was a part? And of Nevis he was a part! She had been able to disassociate them only until he stood before her, quick. And now she should see him, talk to him every day, possibly receive his devotions, for there was no doubt that he admired her as the antithesis of all to which he had been accustomed from birth. Unquestionably she must take her part in his redemption. The thought thrilled her, and she paused a moment looking out over the water. Faded, even repellent, as that husk was, not only was his genius so far unimpaired, but she believed that she had caught a glimpse of a great soul dwelling apart in that polluted tenement. From the latter she shrank with all the aversion of uncontaminated girlhood, but she felt that she owed it to her intellect to recognize the separateness of those highest faculties possessed by the few, from the flesh they were forced to carry in common with the aborigines. And it seemed almost incredible that his life had not swamped, mired, smothered all that was lofty and beautiful in that inner citadel. Her feminine curiosity impelled her to discover if this really were so, or if he had merely retained a trick of expression.

She was skirting the town, keeping close to the shore, but she paused again, involuntarily, to look in the direction of that baker's dwelling, through the window of which, some months since, Byam Warner, mad with drink, had precipitated himself one night, shrieking for the handsome wife of the indignant spouse. For this escapade he had lain in jail until a colored planter had bailed him out—for the white creoles thought it a good opportunity to emphasize their opinion of him—and although he had been dismissed with a fine, the judge had delivered himself of a weighty reprimand which was duly published in the local paper. He had lain in prison only forty-eight hours, but *he had lain in prison*, and the disgrace was indelible. No wonder he had been ashamed to hold up his head, had hesitated so long to accept Lady Hunsdon's invitation. The wonder was it

had been extended. Anne shrewdly inferred it never would have been in London, no matter what the entreaties of Lord Hunsdon, but on this island many laws were relaxed and many a sin left behind.

Then her thoughts swung to his indubious assertion that he had emerged from his lair merely that he might meet her. She recalled the admiration in his eyes, the desperate effort with which he had overcome his shyness and approached her. What irony, if after having been ignorant, unsuspecting of her existence during all those years of her worship, when she had been his more truly than in many a corporeal marriage, he should love her now that she could only think of him with pity and contempt. It gave her a fierce shock of repulsion that he might wish to marry her, dwell even in thought upon possessing her untouched youth after the lewdness of his own life. She must crush any such hope in its bulb if she would not hate him and do him ill when she sincerely wished him well. She reviewed the beaux of Bath House for one upon whom she might pretend to fix her affections, and at once, before Warner's inclination ripened into passion; but the very thought of entering into a serious flirtation with any of those tight-waisted, tight-trousered exquisites, induced a sensation of ennui, and with Hunsdon she did not care to trifle. He might be wearisome, but he was good and sincere, and Lady Mary should have him were it in her power to bring about that eminently proper match.

It was at this point in her reflections that she found herself opposite the house of the poet.

VII

SHE had walked more rapidly than she had been aware of and was shocked at her apparent unmaidenliness in approaching the house of a man, and at night, in whom she was irresistibly interested; although, to be sure, if she walked round the island, to pass his

house sooner or later was inevitable. She was about to turn and hurry home, when she saw what had appeared to be a shadow detach itself from the tree in the court and approach her. She recognized Warner and stood rooted to the ground with terror. All the wild and detestable stories she had heard of him rushed upon her, and although she had met many a hard character when tramping her moors and felt sure of coming off best in a struggle, her strength ebbed out of her before this approaching embodiment of all mysterious vice. To fly down the beach in a hoop was impossible; besides, she would look ridiculous. But what would he do? She forgot his eyes and remembered only his adventures.

Yet he looked anything but formidable as he came closer, and, being without a hat, bowed courteously. Under the softening rays of the moon his features looked less worn, his skin less pallid, and, perhaps because she was alone and attracted him strongly, his hang-dog air was less apparent. He even made an effort to straighten his listless shoulders as he came close enough to get a full view of the beautiful young woman, standing with uncovered head and neck in the bright light of the moon and staring at him with unaccountable apprehension.

"It is I, Miss Percy," he said. "Have you walked ahead of your party? I have not seen anyone pass."

"I—it is a dreadful thing to do, I know—I stepped out of the window—just to take a stroll by myself. I never seem to get a moment alone. I am so tired of hearing people chatter. I was thinking—before I knew it I was here. I must go back. My aunt will be very angry."

"Let me get you a cloak. Your shoulders are bare and the fog will come down presently."

He went rapidly into the house and she had her chance to flee, but she waited obediently until he returned with a long black Inverness, which he laid about her shoulders. "I shall walk home with you," he said. "I don't think you are quite prudent to go

about alone at night. There are rough characters in the town."

"Ah!—never again. You are very kind. I do not know why I should trouble you."

He did not make the conventional response, and for a few moments they walked on in silence. Then, gathering confidence, as he barely looked at her and was undeniably sober, she asked abruptly: "Why have you never written of the fairy orchestra one hears every night? It is about the only phase of Nevis you have neglected."

"The little bells? Thank you for calling my attention to it. I remember—I once thought of it, but so many other things claimed my attention, and I forgot it. I fancy I seldom hear it. But you are right; it is very lovely and quite peculiar to the West Indies. If it would please you I will write some verses about it—well—one of these days."

"I wish you would write them while I am here."

"I am not in the mood for writing at present."

He spoke hurriedly, and she understood. Hunsdon had told her that he never wrote save under stimulants. Could it be possible that he had made up his mind not to drink so long as she was on Nevis? She turned to him a radiant face of which she was quite unconscious, as she replied eagerly: "Yes! We have all resolved that you shall not write a line this winter. A few months out of your life are nothing to sacrifice to people that admire and long to know you as we do. Never was a man so sought. I cannot tell you how many schemes we have already devised to get hold of you—"

"But why—in heaven's name? I cannot help feeling the absurdity."

"Not at all. You are the most celebrated poet of the day, and all the world loves a lion."

"For some five years the world of Bath House has existed without the capers of the local lion," he responded dryly.

"Ah, but you were so determined a recluse. It takes a Lady Hunsdon to

coax a lion from his cave. And, no doubt, she is the only person to come to Bath House during all these years who knew you well enough to take such a liberty. You are such an old and intimate friend of her son."

He stole a quick glance at her, as if to ascertain were she as ignorant of his life as she pretended, but she was now successfully in the rôle of the vivacious young woman who, in common with the rest of the world, admired his work and was flattered to know the author.

"Don't think that we mean to make fools of ourselves and bore you," she added, with another radiant and somewhat anxious smile. "But now that the opportunity has come we are all so happy, and we feel deeply the compliment you have already paid us. Lady Hunsdon hopes that you will read from your works some evening—"

"Good God, no! Unless, to be sure, you have a charity entertainment. I have done that in the past and felt that the object compensated for the torture. But I am somewhat surprised to find that you are a lion hunter."

"I don't think I am—that is, I hardly know. You are the first great man I have ever seen. Perhaps after a season in London I shall be quite frivolous and worldly."

"I can imagine nothing of the kind. I am not so surprised to learn that you have not yet spent a season in town."

"Oh, yes, I am a country girl," she said roguishly.

"Not quite that." But he did not pursue the subject, and in a few moments they came to the gates of Bath House. He took the cloak from her shoulders. "It would exceed the bounds of decorum should I escort you further," he said formally. "If you will hasten you will not take cold. Good night."

She thanked him and ran up the steps and, avoiding the saloon, to her own room.

"I have begun well," she thought triumphantly. "No one could say that I have not done my part. And if he does not drink for three months—who knows?"

VIII

ANNE conceived more respect for Lord Hunsdon as the days went on, for there was no doubt that his stratagem, carefully planned and carried out, was succeeding. Whether Warner suspected his object or not no one could guess, but that he was flattered and encouraged there could be no question. Invitations to Bath House descended in showers. He breakfasted, lunched, dined there, drove with the ladies in the afternoon, and finally summoned up courage to be host at a picnic in the hills. He was still shy and quiet, but he no longer looked abject and listless. His shoulders were less bowed, even his skin grew more normal of hue, the flesh beneath it firmer. It might be a fool's paradise; these spoilt people of the world might have forgotten him before their return next winter, but the mere fact that they overlooked his flagrant insults to society and once more permitted him to become an active member of his own class, was enough to soothe ugly memories and make the blood run more freely in his veins.

Anne treated him with a uniform courtesy and flattering animation, but made no opportunities for private conversation, and he on his side made no overt attempt at deliberate approach. On the contrary, although she often caught him regarding her steadily, sometimes with a sadness that made her turn aside with a paling color, he seemed rather to avoid her than otherwise. Not so Lord Hunsdon. He was ever at her side in spite of her manifest indifference, and daily confided to her his delight in Warner's response, and his hopes. He joined her in no more of her walks, but he rarely failed to attend her in the orchard in the afternoon—where the younger guests never tired of watching the little black boys scramble up the tall, thin, smooth cocoanut trees, and, grinning and singing amid the thick mass of leaves at the top, shake down the green, delicious fruit—or in the saloon after dinner. Frequently he invited a small party to take grenadilla ices on the terrace of the gay little

restaurant in Charlestown, where half the creole world of Nevis was to be met, and upon one occasion he took several of the more venturesome out to spear turtles, that Anne alone might be gratified. So far he had made no declaration, and often stared at her with an apprehension and a diffidence that seemed a travesty on the fettered and tortured soul that looked from Warner's eyes; but his purpose showed no wavering, despite the efforts of Lady Hunsdon and of Anne herself to bring him to the feet of Lady Mary. That his mother was uneasy was manifest. She was too worldly to pin her faith to the apparent indifference of any portionless young woman to a wealthy peer of the realm, and the more she saw of Anne Percy the less she favored her as a daughter-in-law. Lady Constance, who understood her perfectly, laughed outright one evening as she intercepted a scowl directed at Hunsdon and Miss Percy, who sat apart in one of the withdrawing-rooms.

"She won't have him. Do not worry."

"I am not at all sure. You forget that Hunsdon would be a great match for any girl."

"She does not care two straws about making a great match."

"Fiddlesticks!"

"She is made on the grand scale. Hunsdon is all very well, but he makes no appeal to the imagination. I am almost glad Warner has made such a wreck of himself. A handsome, dashing young poet, with the world at his feet, might be fatal to her. Warner never was dashing, to be sure, but he certainly was handsome ten years ago, and fame is a dazzling halo."

"He improves every day, but he seems to fancy Miss Percy as little as any of the others."

"Poor devil! I suppose he recalls the time when so many girls tried to marry him. I cannot see much improvement myself, although he does not look quite so much like a lost soul roaming about in search of a respectable tenement. But his physical attraction is all gone. Not one of the girls

is in love with him, not one of the men jealous."

"Oh, certainly no woman could fall in love with him, any more than any parent would accept him. And as he is quite safe I wish he would command more of Miss Percy's attention, and leave her with the less to bestow on Hunsdon."

"He is too much in love with her."

"What?"

"I seem to be the only person in Bath House with eyes in my head. He is desperately, miserably in love with her, and too conscious of his own ruin, too respectful of her, to dream of addressing her. He would stay away altogether, I fancy, did he not find a doubtful pleasure in looking at her."

"I am distressed if I have added to his trouble," said Lady Hunsdon, who prided herself upon always experiencing the correct sentiments. "I hoped he came so often to us because we had restored his lost self-respect, and he was grateful to be among his equals once more."

"Oh, that, doubtless. But the rose-leaves crumple more with every visit. I only hope the reaction will not awaken the echoes of Nevis."

"What a raven! Let us hope for the best and continue to do our duty. If he really is in love with Anne Percy it may prove his redemption."

"Much more likely his damnation. It will be the last drop in a cup of bitterness already too full."

"You grow sentimental."

"I always was. But that never prevented me from seeing things as they are. The result is that I am generally called cynical. But don't worry about Hunsdon. He needs a refusal, and this is his only opportunity."

Lady Mary Denbigh achieved a signal triumph; she persuaded the poet to accompany her to church. Fig Tree Church, romantically poised on the side of the mountain, was this year the favored place of worship with the guests of Bath House; and where this select extract of London led, all the world of Nevis followed. And not merely the wives and daughters of the

English creole planters, but the colored population, high and low, who could make themselves smart enough. It was long since Warner had entered a church, and the brilliant scene contributed to the humor of his mood. The church looked as gay as an afternoon rout in London at the height of the season, and the aristocracy of Nevis was quite as fine as the guests of Bath House. Their costumes were of delicate fabrics, radiant of hue, and they were beflounced and beruffled, and fringed and ribboned. There were floating scarfs and sashes of lace and silk; bonnets were covered with plumes and flowers, the little bunch of curls on either side of nearly every face half-concealed by a mass of blonde or tulle. Behind the elect sat the respectable colored creoles, often dignified and noble of aspect, for the West Indian African had been born from a superior race; their dress differing little from that of their betters. But who shall describe the throng of colored folk massed at the back of the church, a caricature of the gentry in their Sunday abandon to the mightiest of their passions? Their colors were primal, their crinolines and bonnets enormous—the latter perched far back—their plumes, if cheaper, were even longer; where flowers and ribbons took the place of feathers heads looked like window-boxes; their sleeves were so tight that they could not hold their prayer-books at the correct angle, and more than one had stumbled over her train as she dropped her skirts and tripped into the church. They were still further bedecked with a profusion of false jewelry, cotton lace and fringe, ribbons streaming from every curve and angle, and shoes as gaudy as the flowers on their bonnets. Their men, in imitation of the aristocrats, wore of the best quality they could muster: smart coats, flowered waistcoats, ruffled neck-cloths, tight white trousers, and pointed boots a size too small. They were the tradespeople of the village, or in some cases the servants on the estates; although by far the greater number of the young women of humbler Nevis had received a smattering

of education and were now too good to work. Their parents might get a living as best they could, huckstering or on the plantations, while the improved offspring, content to herd in one room on the scantiest fare, dreamed of gala days and a scrap of new finery. Nevertheless, many of them were handsomer than the white, fragile-looking aristocrats, with their olive or cream-colored skins, liquid black eyes and superb, undulating figures.

Warner had more than once written of the tragedy of these people, his poet's imagination tracing the descent of the finer specimens from ancient kings whose dust was mixed with the sands of the desert; and his had been one of the most impassioned voices lifted in the cause of emancipation. For these reasons he was much beloved by the colored folk of Nevis, of all ranks, and some one of them had never failed to come forward when he lay ill and neglected, or the bailiffs threatened to sell his house over his head. All obligations were faithfully discharged, for he received handsome sums from his publishers, but his patrimony was long since squandered; nothing remaining to him but his home and a bit of land high on the mountain, which he had clung to because he loved its wild beauty and solitude.

Lady Mary Denbigh, with her languishing airs, her "Book of Beauty" style, bored him more than anyone in Bath House, and he had begun to suspect that her attentions were due not more to vanity than to a desire to find favor with Lord Hunsdon. But she was seldom far from Anne Percy, whose propinquity he could enjoy even if debarred communion. And Lady Mary frequently made Anne the theme of her remarks in entertaining the poet; whose covert admiration she, too, detected and encouraged, although not without resentment. Miss Percy was undeniably handsome and high-born, but, alas! quite lacking in fashion, in style, in *ton*. Not that Lady Mary despaired of her. If she could be persuaded to pass three seasons in London, divorced from that stranded corner of

England where she had spent twenty-two long years, all her new friends felt quite hopeful that she would yet do them credit and become a young lady of the highest fashion. Her figure was really good, if somewhat Amazonian, and her face, if not quite regular—with those black eyebrows as wide as one's finger, and that square chin, when all the beauties had oval contours and delicate arches above limpid eyes—was, as she had before maintained, singularly striking and handsome, and if perhaps too warmly colored, this was not held to be a fault by some.

Warner recalled the bitter-sweet of her babble as he heard her sigh gently beside him, her long golden ringlets shading her bent face. His eyes wandered, after their habit, to Anne Percy, who sat across the church, distinguished in that gay throng by bonnet and gloves and gown of immaculate white. He worshiped every irregular line in that noble, impulsive, passionate face, and wondered that he had ever thought another woman beautiful; condemned his imagination that it had lacked the wit to conceive a like combination. Her eyes, commonly full of laughter, he had seen darken with anger and melt with tenderness. There were moments when she looked so strong as momentarily to isolate herself from normal womanhood, and suggest unlimited if unsuspected powers of good or evil; but those were fleeting impressions; as a rule she looked the most completely human woman he had ever known.

He sighed and looked away. A wave of superlative bitterness shook him, but he was too just to curse life, or anyone but himself. He did not even curse the worthless woman who had struck the curb from his inherited weakness and made him a slave instead of a rigid and insolent master. She had been no worse, hardly more captivating, than a thousand other women, but she had appealed powerfully to his poetical imagination, and he had elevated her into the sovereignty of his destiny, endowed her with all the graces of soul, the grandeur of character and passion that he had hitherto shaped from the

rich components of his brain. When he was faced with the naked truth his mental disquiet was as great as his anguish. If this woman, one of the most finished works of the most civilized country on the globe, had revealed herself to be but common clay, where should he find another worth loving? Surely the woman was not yet evolved who could fasten herself permanently to his soul and his sense. This may have been a rash conclusion for a man of his years, but a poet is as old in brain at six-and-twenty as he is green in soul at sixty. With all the ardor of his youth and temperament he had longed for his mate, dreamed of a life of exalted companionship on the most poetic of isles; and one woman, cleverer than many he had met, had read his dreams, simulated his ideal, and amused herself until the game ceased to amuse her; and the richest nabob of the moment returned from India with a brown skull like a mummy and offered his rupees in exchange for the social state that only the daughter of a great lord could give him. She had laughed good-naturedly as Warner flung himself at her feet in an agony of incredulous despair, and told him that no mood had become him so well, for hitherto he had never expressed himself fully save in verse. And Anne, neither classic nor modish, still vaguely resembled her! It was this suggestion of the woman whom at least he must always remember as the perfection of female beauty, that had tempted him to lurk in the darkness of the terrace and watch Anne through the windows of Bath House. In a day when girls cultivated the sylph, minced in their speech, had numberless affectations, his early choice had possessed a noble, large figure and a lofty dignity. She was not ashamed to walk, was to be seen on her horse in the Row every morning, and cultivated her excellent brain.

But the resemblance, Warner had divined at once, was superficial, and the first interview had justified his instinct. Anne was a child in many ways; the other, although younger in years, had been cool, shrewd, calculating, making

no false moves in any game she chose to play. Warner knew that if he had discovered a gold mine in Nevis and won her he should have hated her long since.

But Anne Percy! He could not make the same mistake twice. And had he met her when he had a decent home and an honored name to offer her he believed that he could have found happiness in her till the end of his life. Nor, had she loved him, would she have been influenced by worldly considerations. He had seen little of women of the great normal middle class. Conditions had thrown him with the very high or the very low, and experience taught him that the former when unmarried were all angling for husbands, and the latter for patrons. Therefore he had created a world of ideal women—one secret of his popularity, for every woman that read his poems looked into the poet's magic mirror and saw herself—and he had found happiness in creating, as poets must. Even since his ostracism there had been many hours of sustained happiness and moments of rapture when he had quite forgotten his position among men. And Anne Percy, in her radiant presence, drove his ideals into the shadows and covered them with cobwebs! And he could never claim her! Even were he not a poor, broken creature, with little alive in him but that still flickering soul dwelling in his faded, unspeakable body, he would not even offer the commonest attentions to this uncommon girl who was worthy of the best of men. Nor did he wish to suffer any more deeply than he did at present. To know her better would be to love her more. When she left the island he hoped to relegate her to the plane upon which he dwelt in dreams, and forget that she had not been a created ideal.

But he was sometimes surprised at the strength of his suffering and his longing. He was so unutterably tired, had been for years, so weary in mind and body through excess and misery and remorse, so bitterly old, that he was amazed there should be moments when

he experienced the fleeting hopes and deep despair of any other lover of his years. He left his bed at night and went out and walked about the island, or rowed until he was lost under the stars; he dreamed miserably of her over his books, or hid in the cane-fields to watch her swing by in the early morning, divested of that hideous hoop-skirt, and unconsciously adopting the undulating gait of the colored women she passed. He had replenished his wardrobe and was becoming as dandified as any blood in Bath House, having borrowed from Hunsdon against his next remittance. And as he was eating regularly for the first time in years—less and less of the concoctions of his own worthless servants—and drinking not at all, there was no doubt that he was improving in appearance as well as in health, in vitality. The last word rose in his brain today for the first time. Could it be that this mortal lassitude might leave him neck and heel? That red blood would run in his veins once more? To what end? He was none the less disgraced, none the less unfit to aspire to the hand of Anne Percy. Not only would the world denounce her if she yielded, but his own self-contempt was too deep to permit him to take so much innocent loveliness to himself. But the thought often maddened him, and today, as he looked up and caught her eyes fixed upon him, suddenly to be withdrawn with a deep blush, he had to control himself from abruptly leaving the church. More than once he had suspected an interest which in happier conditions might have developed very rapidly. There was no doubt that his work meant more to her than to any woman he had ever met, and he was convinced that she avoided him both from a natural shrinking and because her strong common sense compelled her to see him as he was; forbade her imagination to transmute his battered husk into the semblance of what was left of his better self. But she could love him. That was the thought that sent the blood to his head and drove him from his pillow.

But it did not drive him to brandy.

He had felt no temptation to drink since he met her. It was true that before his final downfall he had only felt the actual necessity of stimulant coincidently with the awakening of his wondrous but strangely heavy muse; but during the past five years he had burnt out tormenting thoughts and remorse with alcohol, drinking but the more deeply when his familiar throbbed dully and demanded release.

He could not look ahead. He had not the least idea what would be the immediate result of the departure of Anne Percy and his return to the loneliness of his home. With a reinvigorated body and some renewal of his faith in woman, he might resist temptation if he thought it worth while. But the next poem? What then? He had never written a line of serious work except under the influence of brandy. He knew that he never should. And with nothing else to live for, to forswear the muse to whom he was indebted for all the happiness he had ever known was too much for God or man to ask of him.

He had been sitting tensely, and he suddenly leaned back and endeavored to invoke into his soul the peace that pervaded the house of worship. The good clergyman was droning, fans and silken skirts were rustling, eyes challenging. But outside the light wind was singing in the palm-trees, the warm air entered through the window beside him laden with the sweet perfumes of the tropics. The sky was as blue as heaven. He reflected gratefully that at least he had never grown insensible to the beauty of his island, never even contemplated deserting her for either the superior advantages or the superior dissipations of the great world. To live his life on Nevis and with Anne Percy! Oh, God! He almost groaned aloud, and then came to himself as Lady Mary rose and extended the half of her hymn-book.

As he left the church Hunsdon took his arm and, begging Lady Mary to excuse them both, led him down the mountain by a side path to Hamilton House. It was evident that the young

nobleman had something on his mind, but it was not until they were in Warner's study, and he had fidgeted about a few moments that he brought it out.

"Of course, old fellow, you divine that I have a favor to ask?" he said, growing very red and staring out of the window.

Warner, who had seated himself, looked surprised, but replied that no favor was too great to be asked by the best of friends. Then he wondered if Hunsdon had guessed his love for Anne Percy and was come to warn him from Bath House. With a hot rush of blood to the head he almost hoped that the favor was nothing less and he might relieve his overcharged feelings by pitching Hunsdon out of the window.

But nothing could have been so far from Hunsdon's well-regulated mind. He had come on a very different errand.

"The truth is—well, my dear Byam, you no doubt have seen how it is with me, long since—the state of my affections. But I do not seem to make much headway. Miss Percy is charming to all, but the only reason that I sometimes permit myself to hope is because she is occasionally rude to me. I am told that is always a propitious sign in females."

"Do you want me to propose for you?" asked Warner.

"Oh, by no means. I shall do that myself when I think the moment is ripe. But it is not, as yet. What do you think?"

"I have not the least idea, not being an eavesdropper."

"Of course not, dear old fellow. And naturally you do not take much interest in such matters. But there are certain preliminary steps a man may take, and as I never paid court to a woman before, I fear I am not as skilled as some. I feel that you could assist me materially."

"I have few opportunities of talking apart with Miss Percy, but I am willing to inform her of the high esteem in which I hold you—"

"Oh, dear me, no! Her aunt, I fear, does too much of that. Young women should not be antagonized by being

made to feel that their relatives and friends are too anxious for a match. I fancy they are not unlike us, the best of them, in that regard. No, what I should like, what would be of inestimable service in my suit, would be to have you write a sonnet or madrigal to her in my name, that is to say that I could sign—which would not be so good as to betray the authorship. As you know, many men with no pretensions whatever write odes and sonnets to their fair ones, but I could not even make a rhyme. She does not know that, however, and if it were not too fine, yet delicately flattering—I feel sure that she would be touched."

"By all means, my dear fellow." Warner almost laughed aloud as he wheeled about and took up a quill. He had no jealousy of Hunsdon, knew that he would never win Anne Percy; but the irony of inditing a sonnet to her in the name of another man took away his breath.

He wrote steadily for an hour, copying and recopying, for he was too great an artist to send forth even an anonymous trifle incomplete in finish. Lord Hunsdon, who was a young man of excellent parts, took from the table a copy of the "*De Augmentis Scientiarum*," and read diligently until Warner crossed the room and handed him the sonnet.

Hunsdon was enraptured, but Warner refused to be thanked.

"It would be an odd circumstance," he said dryly, "if I could not do that much for you."

Hunsdon blushed furiously. "Only one thing more could make me the happiest of men," he cried, with that kindling of the eye that in other conditions would have developed into a steady fanaticism. "And when all is well, you must come and live with us. Now that the world has found you once more I feel that I, above all, should be held to account, did you despise and forget it again. I shall not even leave you behind when I return to England. Now I must run off and copy this. Remember, you dine with us tonight."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE COURAGE OF KITTIE

By Lilian Bell

HE kissed her twice before he answered her question. They had been engaged since nine o'clock and it was now four minutes past.

"Isn't it?" she repeated.

"Isn't it what?" he asked.

"Isn't it a shame that our engagement must be so different from all the rest?"

"Our engagement *couldn't* be like any other if it tried!" he said fervently.

She laughed.

"Silly!" she whispered.

Silence.

"Don't, Bob!"

"Why, don't you like it, Kittie?"

"Yes. But don't!"

"All right. Then I'll have to move over here."

"Perhaps you'd better. I want to talk," said the girl.

"I don't," said the man cheerfully.

"I wish," said the girl, "that you weren't going away."

"I wish so, too. But mother is all worn out taking care of father and the last doctor he has tried has ordered him to Carlsbad. So I must go with him, if only to stand between mother and the old man's tantrums."

"Is your father very ill, dear?"

"No, darling. Father has a chronic case of hereditary bad temper which he calls indigestion. It gives him an excuse to bully the servants and storm at his family and this brings on attacks of dyspepsia. If father would only consent to be cheerful and enjoy life, he would be a well man."

"Then, Bob dear, why don't you try to amuse the poor old man?"

"Because I don't like him," said his son frankly.

"Is he very old?"

"Not old at all. Only nasty and disagreeable. Everybody hates him."

"Oh, Bob, don't say such things about your father, even if they are true! Remember that—"

"That he is my father," interrupted the young fellow. "That's always what mother says. It makes me wild to hear that silly old argument dragged in so often. The last time mother said it, I fired back, 'Well, dearest, it never occurred to me to think he was my bachelor uncle!'"

Kittie's laughter rang out involuntarily.

"What did she say?" the girl inquired.

"She bit her lip first. Then she howled."

"Your mother howled!" protested Kittie. "What sacrilege such a word is, applied to that beautiful, gentle, dignified patrician!— Oh, Bob—*please!*"

"Well, I can't help it, dearest. You know I am rather silly over my mother. I think she is the most perfect woman—of her age, mind you—that the Lord ever turned out. And her divine patience with the old man!"

"Well, Bob Schuyler, you care about eating, I've noticed, just about as much as any man I ever saw. To hear you order a dinner is to know where your heart is. Now, how would you like it if everything good to eat poisoned you? How would you like it if there were never, never more to be any more rare-bits nor broiled lobsters nor crab flakes au gratin nor—"

"Hold on, Kittie! Stop talking about such things or we'll have to call up a chaperon and light out for the goods."

"Well, but honestly now, don't you ever feel sorry for your father?"

The young man's face grew serious.

"Yes, I do," he said after a pause.

"You are right. We Schuylers are all devoted to good feed. You ought to have heard father order a dinner—especially in Paris—before he got dyspepsia. It was to the ordinary selection what the Recessional is to Mother Goose."

"Now you see!" cried the girl sympathetically.

"And, even now," continued the young man, "he has certain tastes which are so deep-rooted that—well, we never dare have even the odor of the stuff in the house. Chocolate, for example!"

"Chocolate!" cried the girl excitedly. "Why, I—but go on! Go on!"

"Well, he used to make a cup of chocolate which mother said made his Sunday morning breakfasts in Washington so famous she used to be obliged to issue invitations to them four weeks in advance. Now, when he even smells it in other people's houses—why, I've seen him clench his hands and breathe hard—as if it gave him physical pain to realize that he must avoid it as a plague—for it fairly poisons him."

"Poor soul!" sighed the tender-hearted girl, but with an excited sparkle in her eyes, which her lover did not understand. "I wish I could see him!"

"I wouldn't have you see him for a million dollars!" cried the young man. "If father knew we were engaged his one effort in life would be to estrange us. He is a perfect old dev—"

A soft hand was laid over his mouth. Instead of saying "devil," the man said "Angel!" and kissed the little pink palm which had interrupted him.

"Was there ever such a pretty hand before?" he murmured fatuously, crushing its pink-and-white sweetness against his lips.

"You dear thing!" cried the girl. "I love the way you make love to me! But listen. Is your father's contrariness absolutely to be depended upon?"

"Without fail! If he thought I didn't want to marry you, it would be his one aim in life to make me. And he calls that dyspepsia!"

"Then don't you see?" cried the girl.

"See what?"

"Why, that if we can make him believe that you don't like me and that you want to go to Carlsbad to get away from me—"

"Kittie Van Rensselaer, you are as great a genius as David Belasco! Why, it's a plot that ought to be dramatized. I'd better drop in and see Dave tomorrow."

"Don't make fun of it," pouted the girl. "If you only knew what depended upon it!"

"What does, Kittie?" he cried seizing her hands. "Are you keeping anything back from me?"

"Well," said the girl. "I have never told you, but my family are simply crazy for me to marry Sir Ethelbert Scrymgeour, and—"

"Marry that little, bandy-legged, red-eyed, damp-haired, blue-nosed—"

"That is quite sufficient," said Kittie. "I know the one you mean."

"Marry him!" snorted Bob.

"And soon, too," said Kittie complacently.

Even the best of women enjoy seeing their lovers churn themselves into a froth of fury from jealousy.

"Then what can we do to get our own engagement solid?" said Bob eagerly.

"That's just it. Ours must be solid, for if my family thought that any objection to me came from yours—don't you see how they would use it to rush me into a marriage with Sir Ethel?"

Bob reached for his mustache to gnaw, then remembered that he had shaved it off to please Kittie.

"I wouldn't dare have you meet the old man the way he is now," groaned Bob. "He'd insult you and then lay it onto his dyspepsia."

"Would your mother help us?" asked Kittie.

"Like a shot. She adores you."

"Then get her to ask me to spend a few days with her, when my people go up to Fishkill to spend Easter with Grandmother Van Rensselaer. Tell her to pretend that I am going to marry Sir Ethelbert. Didn't you tell me that your father met Sir Ethel at Pasadena?"

"Yes, and hated him so it cankers the roof of his mouth even to think of him." They nearly came to blows once."

"Lovely!" cried the girl. "We'll make your father beg me on his knees to marry you. Now you must tangle yourself up with another girl. Does your father hate any particular girl in a particularly virulent manner?"

"You bet he does. Catch father skipping any hate bets. He simply loathes Addie Black."

"What for? What has she done?"

"Well, she—er—he thinks she—oh, I don't know. Hanged if anybody knows why the old man hates people!" stammered Bob, lying like a gentleman.

Kittie sat up straight and looked into Bob's red face.

"So it is true?" she said complacently.

"What's true?" demanded Bob.

"Alice Farnham said Addie Black fairly threw herself at your head and wooed your whole family into the bargain."

"What rot!" growled Bob. "She only—"

"Don't lie about it, darling," said Kittie, with severity. Then in answer to the anxious way Bob's hand sought hers, she said softly:

"She only showed her good taste if she did fall in love with you. Don't, Bob! You hurt me!"

Thus it was settled and Bob Schuyler so successfully managed things with his mother that on the Thursday before Easter General Schuyler sat growling and fuming because Miss Black had been invited to dinner to meet little Miss Van Rensselaer, who had arrived in time for luncheon and had made a most agreeable impression.

"Just as I get to like a girl, and want to hear a little more of her gay chatter, you go and invite that red-headed Circe to spoil it all. Gay little girl, that Miss Van Rensselaer. Never heard a better joke than the one she played on the Smith College crowd. What?"

The butler entered with a note. Mrs. Schuyler tore it open.

"Well, dear, your lucky star is in the

ascendent," she said. "Miss Black can't come."

"Good! Good!" said the general inhospitably. "Now we can have her all to ourselves."

He insisted upon having her at his right hand at dinner, which was anything but pleasant for the young girl, because the old man had a pair of tiny silver scales on the table and weighed every mouthful he ate, monopolizing the whole conversation meanwhile to tell how careful he must be about his diet and how he suffered.

But whenever she found an opening in the dreary monologue, to which most dyspeptics treat their friends, Kittie dashed gallantly in, and chattered with such persistent gaiety that twice the old man ate the wrong amount.

The second time he did this he caught her mischievous glance.

"Are you laughing at me, young woman?" he growled, and both Bob and his mother looked apprehensive.

"I believe, now that you mention it, that I am," said the girl.

General Schuyler laid down his fork and stared at her.

"And for what reason, may I ask?" he began politely.

"Because," said Kittie, "you have laughed so much you've lost all that horrid pallor and your cheeks are as pink—pinker than mine! Doesn't he look handsome, Mrs. Schuyler?"

"Ha, hum!" coughed the general, trying to frown, but with twitching lips.

He straightened his collar and squared his shoulders.

"I used to be—well, fairly set up in my young days—eh, Polly?"

Bob coughed and looked at his mother. For years the pet name "Polly" had not been used. His mother colored with pleasure.

"The general was considered one of the handsomest men in the army when I married him," she said proudly.

"But age and illness—" began the general.

Kittie Schuyler began to laugh.

"Age!" she cried. "And illness! Why, General Schuyler, you are positively funny!"

"Am I? Am I? I don't feel funny!"

"But how ridiculous! Dyspepsia isn't fatal. It can be cured. Anybody would think, to hear you talk, that you were in the last stages of consumption or were a leper, or a—"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the old man. He had played with an illness so long, he had forgotten that there might be real ones, harder to bear.

"But I am ill," he said eagerly. "I can't eat anything I like. I can't drink coffee or any of the substitutes. Milk by itself sickens me and cocoa is too thin and chocolate too rich, yet sometimes, when I get the aroma of a good cup of chocolate, I crave it unspeakably. But if I yield and drink it—well, Polly will tell you! Wasn't that attack of mine at Pasadena something dreadful?"

"I think the fit of rage you flew into just after drinking it had something to do with your seizure," said Mrs. Schuyler. "There was an Englishman there, Miss Van Rensselaer, who used deliberately to insult our American institutions, and everybody fairly hated him. The general wouldn't allow his sneers to go unanswered, so everybody gathered around when my husband and Sir Ethelbert—"

"Sir Ethelbert!" interrupted the girl. "Not Sir Ethelbert Scrymgeour?"

"Certainly! Certainly!" snorted General Schuyler.

"Father," said Bob quietly. "Did you not know that Miss Van Rensselaer's family favor Sir Ethelbert's suit for her hand?"

"What? What?" shouted the general. He lay back in his chair, picking at his napkin with nervous fingers. He nodded in reply to his wife's warning glance. He looked pityingly, almost fondly at the beautiful, flushed face of the young girl—then almost angrily at his son, and Kittie choked so, she buried her little nose in her handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes as if overcome by emotion.

"There, there! There, there!" said the general, patting her arm. "We will say no more about it, except that I am sorry, genuinely sorry, to see such a

beautiful and charming young girl—yes, Polly, I will say it!—thrown away, absolutely thrown away on such a cad!"

Kittie reached out her hand and gave the general's a little squeeze.

"You know," she said in a muffled voice, "that I don't like him! But—"

"Then what a shame! What an infernal outrage!" shouted the general, bringing his fist down on the table so that the glasses danced. "I wish—" He paused and glared at his son.

"What, father?" asked Bob meekly.

"Nothing!" snorted the old man, "except that I had a son that wasn't an idiot!"

"Miss Black doesn't consider that Bob is an idiot," said Kittie craftily. "I had a note from her today saying she expected to see quite a lot of the Schuylers at Carlsbad."

"At Carlsbad!" cried the general. "Is that true, Polly? Is that woman going to chase us *again*?"

"She will arrive first, dear," said Mrs. Schuyler.

"This time you will chase *her*, father!" said Bob slyly.

"I won't go! If she is going, let her. But we won't! I'll stay here first. We'll go to Saratoga, Polly. Bob, you go tomorrow and cancel our passage. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear."

"Why, we are going to Saratoga for the races," cried Kittie. "Oh, General, do go when the racing season is on. Then I can see you every day."

As the old man looked at the clasped hands of the girl, the slow color rose in his cheeks. He straightened himself.

"My dear," he said, with old-fashioned courtesy, "I shall be honored."

"Oh, isn't he dear, Mrs. Schuyler?" cried the girl.

Mrs. Schuyler beamed on her and Bob tried to reach her foot under the table. He looked as if he would burst, also. But Kittie had her foot tucked back out of harm's way.

"Now, General, I am going to tempt you," said his wife, "but Bob said Miss Van Rensselaer was very fond of

chocolate, so I have ordered it for breakfast. You won't mind, will you, Jack?"

"Jack!" The old man beamed at the half-forgotten name.

"No," he said wistfully.

"He loves it so," explained Mrs. Schuyler, "that I seldom have it, because he cannot drink it."

Kittie laughed so unsympathetically that the old man looked hurt.

"Young lady," he said solemnly, "I'd give—I'd actually give five hundred dollars to drink a cup of chocolate right now and suffer no discomfort from it."

"Well, you can just give me the five hundred to buy chocolate for my sick children," cried Kittie, "for I am going to make you that cup right now."

"It will kill me," murmured the general, "but—"

"You wait!" she said, dimpling.

The butler brought her something on a tray. She took four cups, put something in each, poured hot milk from a little silver pitcher and handed a steaming cup to General Schuyler.

"That," she cried, "is the beginning of my sure cure for your trouble. It tastes like neither cocoa nor chocolate of the common kind, but is a delicious blending of the two aromas and tastes. I cured my Aunt Martha just as I mean to cure you, and I use it on all my sick waifs. Try it and tell me what you think."

All four sipped the delicious beverage in silence.

The general was the first to speak.

"It is the most exquisite chocolate I ever tasted! The five hundred is yours for your sick waifs, Miss Van Rensselaer, because, whether it makes me ill or not, *this cup is worth that price.*"

"But it won't make you ill," cried the girl earnestly. "It will do you good. And—I am going to confess, Mrs. Schuyler!—I brought it on purpose and took your wife into the plot. When Bob told me what kind of a sufferer you were, I said to myself, 'I will cure him,' so I brought it with me on purpose."

The old man pressed her hand.

"You are a good child—a sweet, sympathetic child," he said huskily.

And when the two ladies left Bob and his father to their cigars, the general still talked about her and called his son names until Bob protested:

"Don't, father. I'm not so insensible as you think. Can't you see that I'm crazy about her?"

"Then why—why in the dev—"

"Oh," said Bob wearily, "her family want her to marry, well—money and all that—"

"And that cad has everything, has he, and my son nothing? Well, you look here, Robert. I've just sold out some mining stock and I've a tidy bit of money to invest. Now you investigate this chocolate that Kittie has here. If you can buy any of the stock in the company making it, buy it! It's a good thing—bound to make money. I've worked hard enough trying to make good chocolate, to know. I'll give it all to you. We'll put all the money into it they need to boom the stuff and we'll be killing two birds with one stone. Hang it, boy, looks are something, and—well, if you can get the girl, I'll match every dollar Sir Ethelbert has and it goes with you. The cleverest, sweetest, dearest little woman I ever met! You get the girl, Robert, and I'll set you up in a business that will make things hum. I have had two cups of the stuff and never felt better in my life. If we invest in this chocolate, we ought to double our money in three years. You get the girl, Robert, and I'll get the business."

"Thank you, governor," said Bob, gripping his father's hand. "I'll do my best. If you will excuse me, I'll go and ask her now."

Left alone, the old man looked around furtively, then hastily poured out and drank a third cup.

But the butler saw it and told.

II

AFFAIRS would have gone more smoothly at Saratoga had not the indefatigable Miss Addie Black discov-

ered the Schuylers' change of plan in time to cancel her own passage to Europe and proceed to Saratoga ahead of them, so that no one could accuse her of following her prey. Instead, she went ahead and ambushed it.

Kittie openly called her "Diana the Huntress," but being in her heart as much affronted by the chase as the general himself, together they were able to outwit most of her manœuvres. Only twice during the month did Miss Black win victories and on both occasions General Schuyler worked himself into such a passion that it brought on a terrible attack of indigestion.

Both times he sent for Kittie and demanded her chocolate as a cure, but both times she was mysteriously out of it, and before a fresh supply could reach her, the old man had got well.

In the meantime he had talked frequently to his son, complaining of the tardiness of his wooing, for apparently as yet Kittie had not accepted his offer. He also fretted that they could not properly compel Kittie to tell more about the make of the wonderful chocolate, of whose origin and manufacture she made such a secret.

But when on the general's second attack she was also out of it and could not work a cure, Bob's suspicions were aroused, and he said to her:

"Kittie, now be honest with a fellow. On the level, what is that chocolate and were you really out of it when the governor had his fits? What's the mystery?"

"Why, there is no mystery about it, Bob, dear. I thought you knew that the chocolate was only a means to an end. Your father has no chronic trouble. He brings on these attacks by his lack of self-control, so that when he is kept in a good humor there is nothing to cure *if he only thought so*. So I pretended to cure him with a new kind of chocolate. To be sure, you can't buy it anywhere because I make it myself out of cocoa and grated chocolate, and I *do* give it to my sick waifs exactly as I said. I learned to do it because the chocolate was too strong for one child and she complained that

the cocoa tasted weak. So I experimented until I got this. It is nice, isn't it? But—what's the matter, dear?"

"Nothing. Only, if this is true, we are rather up against it," and he explained the general's plan for financing the young couple by means of the chocolate.

"Well, I seem to have rather put my foot in it, don't I?" said Kittie ruefully.

"The stuff is good, and really cured him that first night. Why wouldn't you give it to him the other day, girlie?"

"Because I knew that in reality it had no curative power and I didn't want to be caught faking. Do you remember the story of the man who shot the prize-turkey through the head the first time he fired, but who couldn't be induced to exhibit his skill a second time? Well, there you are!"

"But why did it cure him the first time?"

"For two reasons. In the first place there was nothing the matter with him. He had been agreeably entertained all during dinner and he could have eaten anything he wanted if he had only thought so. In the second place, he believed that mine was a curative agent and he *wanted* it to succeed. His own mind worked the miracle. The poor little inefficacious chocolate had nothing to do with it. But what makes you look so glum?"

"Because you don't know father. His vanity will have been wounded and he will never forgive you."

"Never forgive me!" cried Miss Van Rensselaer with the scarlet rising in her cheeks. "Well, I must say, Bob Schuyler, you don't seem to have much faith in my powers. If I couldn't handle one crotchety old man and draw his fangs with one hand tied behind me, I'd go drown myself! That's what I'd do!"

"Forgive me, heart of my heart," said the young man. "You ought to fire me for even voicing that ungallant speech. I believe that you can do anything."

Kittie dimpled and smiled in forgive-

ness. Then she wrinkled her smooth brows in perplexed thought as she again faced her problem.

"In the first place, you have all given way to your father too much. He is not half the ogre you would make him out," she said.

"Hum! Have you ever *seen* my father in one of his rages, my dear?"

"No, I haven't. But I wouldn't be afraid to."

"Well, I'd be afraid to have you," declared his son. "I really don't know what he might say to you. He is beside himself. He seems to lose his mind as well as his temper."

"I wouldn't *like* to see him," said Kittie frankly. "But if there is no other way to tame him, I shall have to."

"Well, have you any other way in your mind?"

"Um—well, of course, I have several half-formed schemes. But possibly none of them would work."

"Name one and perhaps I could tell you."

"Well, since you think your father will be very angry when he finds out about the chocolate, suppose you propose to me—"

"What! Again?"

"Yes, again! It won't hurt you."

"Well. And then?"

"Then I'll refuse you!"

"Refuse me?"

"Yes, refuse you. And of course you'll ask me why, and I'll say—now don't make me laugh, because this sounds *too* absurd, but I really believe it would work!—I'll say that you have your father's temper and I really couldn't undertake to submit to being cowed into the Lady-afraid-of-her-husband, like your poor mother."

"Ha! Ha!" roared the young man. "Kittie, I do believe you are a genius! Not one plan in a thousand would bring the poor old governor around like that. He will be furious, but he won't dare to show it, because, if he does, he will be proving my point. It will touch his pride, too, because he adores the mater, only he—"

"All he needs is a point of view to

make him a perfect darling!" interrupted Kittie loyally. "But many a man likes to be regarded as a despot in his own family. It seems to bolster up his own conceit. He rather fancies himself in the rôle."

"Then supposing he sends for you to talk it over?" asked the young man apprehensively.

"I will go!" cried the girl valiantly. "Do you suppose I am afraid? There have been fighters among the Van Rensselaers as well as the Schuylers, my dear young Christian friend! Now, then—propose!"

"Don't stamp your foot at me like that! It's exactly the way you speak to your dog when you want him to sit up and beg."

"Well, I want *you* to sit up and beg, so naturally I forgot and used the same method to make you."

Kittie got to laughing so hysterically while her lover was proposing to her over again and she was refusing him, as per schedule, that they were overheard and the general's valet came with a message for Mr. Bob that his father would like to speak to him.

"Go, now, and get it over with," whispered Kittie, as she paused in the act of flight. "Play up to him and we'll have the despot lashed to our chariot-wheels before the day is over."

"I hope so," murmured the despot's son, yet he looked anything but a conqueror as he stood in the presence of the irascible old man.

Kittie, crouching on the stairs outside, in order to be at hand if an explosion occurred, strained her ears, but the rise and fall of voices were all that rewarded her vigil. She was somewhat disappointed that, after screwing her courage to the sticking-point, she was not sent for, so after a few minutes she went rather disconsolately to her room, experiencing that sinking at the heart which all men and women of ideas encounter when they face the possibility of failure in spite of all their deep-laid plans.

Several hours passed and Kittie was about to seek other amusement when the maid tapped at her door and asked

if she would care to lunch in her room, as Mrs. Schuyler and Mr. Bob were with the general still.

"With him *still*?" exclaimed the girl. "Why, what do you mean? Is he ill?"

"Yes, miss. A very bad attack. Mrs. Schuyler is more worried than I have ever seen her. I've never seen her break down and go all to pieces before."

Kittie's eyes flashed ominously at the news.

"Fool that I was," she said to herself after the maid had gone, "to prepare for a fit of rage and overlook entirely that he might use another of his 'spells' to frighten the family into submission! How *like* Aunt Martha he is—all the way through!"

She had but just finished her luncheon when Bob called to her to come out for a moment. He looked crestfallen and driven, but not beaten, and the girl's heart warmed to him.

"It's no use, Kittie girl," he said. "When I told him that you wouldn't have me on account of my resemblance to him and—and—all that we planned, he had the worst attack I have seen him have in years. He straightened out and clenched his hands and set his teeth and groaned so, I thought he was dying."

"Did you send for the doctor?" asked Kittie.

"Yes, I telephoned myself and described the state he was in."

"What did he say?" pursued the girl quietly.

"He—is—he said to give him a bromide and he would call as soon as he could. He was very busy with one of the children in the hotel."

Kittie laughed heartlessly.

"I saw him. He's with the Skillig child, who has a mild case of whooping cough. He knows your father is shamming and he doesn't want to tell him so, so he just won't come."

"Kittie! You wouldn't think so if you saw how he was suffering."

"Suffering!" cried Kittie. "Suffering! Don't I know how a person can suffer from an ingrowing temper? Didn't my rich old Aunt Martha hold our whole family in thrall for seven

years by taking to her death-bed every time anybody crossed her? Didn't she have every one of us fooled until I found her out? I had a heart-to-heart talk with her and I told her to her face that she was a wicked old impostor and it made her so mad she got well. She is well *now*. And we expected her to die daily for seven years!"

"Father said he would like to see you when he felt better, but—"

"I'll go now," cried Kittie. "I'll make him feel better. Did you tell him about the chocolate?"

"No, I—"

But the girl had gone.

She entered the room and stood beside the old man's bed. A maid was sitting near the window.

"You may go," said Miss Van Rensselaer, "I will sit with him."

The maid rose with alacrity.

"None of them like him," Kittie thought with pity. "He is just tolerated because he is the head of the house, when he could be adored if he would."

She had not been there very long when General Schuyler opened his eyes with a start to find her gazing at him with a disquieting expression in her eyes. He stirred uncomfortably.

"Ah, ah, my dear, I did not hear you come in," he said feebly. "Won't you sit down?"

Still she did not speak, but stood regarding him with a mocking look. He endeavored not to understand her, but under the pressure of her steady gaze he began to fidget.

"Why—why do you stand there looking at me in such a manner?" he stammered.

She did not answer. She only smiled—a knowing smile, which finally became a grin, the grin of the *gamine*.

He turned over to escape it. But curiosity compelled him to face her again.

"Why do you stand there smiling like that, young woman?"

"Because I'm onto you," she said.

"Have a care, Miss Kittie, have a care!"

"Now don't try to come any of that

on *me*," advised the girl. "I *know* you!"

"You know me, do you?"

"Yes. I know you."

"Well, how do you know me?"

"I know a fit of temper when I see it. And I know that temper is the only affliction that General John Schuyler is suffering from or ever has suffered from."

"Nonsense," he cried. "I am a martyr to dyspepsia. Ask my wife. Ask Bob. Ask the doctor."

"Brought on by fits of ungovernable rage," said Kittie imperturbably.

"Nothing of the sort," snorted the old man. "Only this morning I had another seizure. I am suffering horribly this moment."

"Baffled rage!" diagnosed the girl. "Control yourself, and see how soon your pain will disappear."

The old man's eyes darted a look of bitter resentment at the girl, but she proceeded calmly.

"You have got your wife and son badly intimidated, but not hopelessly. Bob is a man in spite of his womanish fear of your temper. He has a man's hatred of 'scenes,' that is all. But your wife's health is giving way under the strain. *She* is the real sick one in this family, not *you*, if you only knew the truth. You've got 'em all scared to death. I told Bob I'd rather die than marry into this family in the state it is in. It would be like marrying into a hospital-ward. I'd wear the uniform of a trained nurse before I knew it, in order to look the part of daughter-in-law to General Schuyler."

The old man's eyes began to snap sparks and his fingers to clutch on the counterpane. But the girl proceeded as if she had not seen.

"They are *afraid* of you. Your own wife is afraid of you. Think of that! Perhaps I'd grow to be like her, intimidated by years of faked illness, and perhaps I'd be afraid of Bob. Who knows? I might fade into the pale shadow that Mrs. Schuyler is now."

"Pale shadow! My wife *faded*!" gasped the old man.

But the clear, cool voice of the girl went on unheeding.

"You are being fooled every day of your life by everybody around you. They are afraid to tell you the truth. Even your own servants make what Bob would call a monkey of you—"

"Make a monkey of me? My own—"

He stopped sputtering at the imperious uplifting of the girl's hand.

"For example, all this nonsense about my chocolate. Do you care to hear the truth about it? Or am I also to be *afraid* to tell you the truth, as Bob is—as your wife is—as your own servants are, son, wife and servants all on a level and banded together in a common conspiracy to give you a garbled version of every unpleasant matter out of fear—fear that you will stiffen out and have one of your spells of bad temper, which you all call dyspepsia and which even the doctor is afraid to tell the truth about! What do you think of it? What sort of a figure do you cut—one moment the courtly, dignified General Schuyler whom society knows, the next moment the family despot, before whose lack of self-control your intimates and servants cower and cringe in fear?"

The old man's gaze was furtive now. He stared at her, his eyebrows twitching, his mouth working.

"But it is the effect on your wife and Bob which is the worst of the matter. Your wife has a weak heart, as you know. But do you ever stop to think of that, when you want to go into one of your spells? Oh, no! She is in her room now with two of the maids attending her, suffering horribly in her efforts to draw her breath, frightened into this state by nothing in the world but *your* selfishness. You frightened her gentle soul into this attack. You traded on her love for you. Is that the act of a man or of a tyrant? And Bob! Do you call *him* a man? He is only a creature, dependent on your whims—entirely under the control of your will. You have hypnotized everybody—everybody except *me*! I saw through you from the first."

She came closer to the bed and her tone became gentler.

"At first I fell in with the usual method and attempted to cajole you, thinking that you were not worth any nobler treatment. Then I fell more in love with Bob and Mrs. Schuyler and you. I saw what a grand character you had been and *were*, under all this evil. I saw you the glorious, strong, brave general—the perfect man—the fulfilled ideal of all a man should be, and I said to myself, 'He is worth saving. He is strong and brave enough to bear it, and his intellect is of such a high order that all he needs is a point of view. I have given it to you—at no small cost to myself. Please believe that.'"

The old man had closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, the girl was gone.

He lay there in utter silence for many minutes. Finally, two tears—the painful tears of a strong man—coursed down his wrinkled cheeks.

"I see myself as I never have before," he whispered. "I am a blight on all I love and hold most dear. I have robbed my wife of her youth and my son of his strength—but if Kittie—where is the girl?"

"I am here, dear," she said in a

muffled voice. "I was just taking a good cry all by myself."

"Crying, my child? Why? You have done a good act—a noble act—a brave and courageous act, and I thank you for it."

"I did it because I loved you and I cried because I had hurt you," whispered the girl.

He patted her hand.

"Tender as a woman and strong as a man," he said. "A fit wife for my son—if—if you will have him. Will you, my girl?"

"I meant to all along if—if—"

"If I took my medicine," he supplemented. "Well, I've taken it, and, moreover, I am grateful. With an Elixir of Youth in the family like yourself, we'll see if great changes are not observable in the Schuyler family."

"As well as in doctors' bills," smiled the girl.

"Kittie," said the old man suddenly, "will you let us announce your engagement to my son at a little dinner to-night?"

"Why—why, yes, if you like. I've already let my family know that we are engaged."

"I'd like, if you don't mind, to include Miss Addie Black. It will do me good to see her face. It will so!"



THE INCARNATION

By Allan Updegraff

THE fire and dew that blessed the morn
 Were gone before I came;
 But under a gnarled and ancient thorn,
 That stood on guard by a field of corn,
 I found a flower like a flame.

Dawn's holy miracle had wrought
 Upon the shining thing;
 Its chalice seemed with a splendor fraught,
 As if the tiny cup had caught
 The body and blood of Spring!

THE GOLDEN LIE

By Helen Frances Huntington

"**Y**OU are certainly getting on, Lance," said Paul Embury, smiling up at his host and friend as he subsided into a deep-seated veranda chair. "This place is a gem in its way."

"I'm so glad you like it, too," said Lance glowingly. "To tell you the truth, I had hard work waiting with any degree of patience for your return. I did so want you to share in the planning of the house and grounds."

Lance proceeded to fill two small glasses with a ready-made cocktail mixture, and having offered one sparkling potion to his guest he seated himself in an opposite chair with an air of extreme enjoyment. He was a commonplace-looking man, with very kind eyes and a capable mouth that possessed the unsuspected magic of a smile so transfiguring in its effect as to have caused a few discriminating persons to call him good-looking in spite of his rugged features and spare figure which inclined toward gauntness.

"The place suits me so perfectly," he went on with immense satisfaction, "that I wouldn't sell it for twice the money I've spent on it. I daresay I should have been satisfied with a much less attractive place to start with, for my tastes are so decidedly domestic that I'm not at all hard to please. I've wanted a home of my own for years and have worked hard to get it—very hard, as you know, Paul. If I hadn't stumbled across that lucky investment two years ago I shouldn't have been able to get anything like this, though, for while it isn't in any way palatial it is about all an ordinary chap like me could ever expect to own."

"It is simply perfect," Paul declared with absolute sincerity, letting his grati-

fied gaze rove along the front lawn which was tastefully dotted with flowerbeds so irregularly placed as to break the formality of an otherwise conventional setting. There was a little curved, rose-bordered walk from the veranda steps to the front gate, and a wide space to the left, between two young lilac hedges, for a drive or an automobile approach, whichever Lance preferred.

"I am delighted to find you so pleased with the place," Lance repeated with a brief glimmer of that illuminating smile of his, "for I do want you to get as much enjoyment out of it as possible, especially during the hot season. Remember that I don't look upon you as a guest, so be sure to run down without waiting for invitations, at any and all times, according to your own convenience. Blanch is just as eager to have you here as I am."

"No one," said Paul, "could resist an invitation like that. You will see me here very often—be sure of that."

"Ah, that suits me!" Lance reached for his glass and sipped its contents slowly, like a temperate woman, for he had never accustomed himself to drinking except in courtesy to his company. "If you knew the vast amount of solid comfort there is in the possession of a home of your own," he went on after a contemplative pause, during which his eyes had retained a reflection of a smile, "you would realize how blessedly contented I am. Why, during the whole week of drudgery in the city I keep looking forward to Saturday afternoon with absolute joy. No matter how tired my brain and body may grow, the mere thought of home and Blanch stimulates me to work still harder, and when Saturday afternoon comes, and my feet finally touch home-ground, the

week's burden slips clean off my mind, and I'm as fresh as a schoolboy bent on a fishing lark. I spend every spare moment digging and fussing and planning, with Blanch to superintend my actual labors. You see what fine shape things are in," with a wave of his capable hand toward the sprucely trimmed hedges that burned with sunset gold.

"Does Blanch like the gardening part of it, too?" Paul asked with interest, for his imagination refused to conjure up a picture of Mrs. Cheswick puttering about newly spaded earth. He knew that she would far rather sit high and dry in a veranda hammock in dainty array, and watch Lance prepare the fruitage which was to be wholly hers like everything else that he had had to do with since she had taken despotic possession of his life.

"Loves it," Lance replied enthusiastically. "Really, Paul, she is the most inspiring little woman in the world. In everything that I undertake she encourages me to the very point of victory. Why, I simply can't fail in anything as long as I have her to work for."

At that moment the speaker's face lighted as if a flame had flashed behind thinly frosted glass affording a momentary glimpse of the composite opulence that dwelt within that unadorned temple. Paul turned and looked toward the doorway, where a glimmer of blue and white furbelows reflected the sun's declining glory. Above that airy variegation was a face of merciless beauty, all snow and rose and gold, with eyes like frozen sapphires.

"Well, Paul, how do you like our little summer camp now that you've seen every inch of it?" Blanch asked as she dropped into the chair her husband offered her.

"I envy you two," was Paul's comprehensive answer.

"By working hard for a very few years you can arrive at the same attainment," Lance spoke up cheerfully with an affectionate glance at his friend. "I have often urged you to settle down to married life—there is nothing like it to anchor a man's heart."

"You forget, Lance, that only ideal marriages turn out satisfactorily and that they are as scarce as December roses," Paul observed with lazy irony. He was thinking that in spite of Blanch's extraordinary beauty and Cheswick's blind adoration he would not change places with his friend under any conceivable circumstances.

Lance gave his wife a look of poignant devotion which she appeared not to notice. "There are hundreds—thousands—of ideal marriages that are never heard about by outsiders," he said. "Ours is one of them. I am quite sure that no one who had never seen me outside of my dull city office, in the midst of my daily grind, would ever suspect that such a plodding, commonplace fellow could have such an adorably happy home as mine. You, Paul, would make some fine little woman a good husband—a girl like little Miss Webb, for instance. Don't you two care about each other—if I may ask such an intimate question?"

Paul shook his head and smiled. He, too, had an agreeable smile, but it lacked the illuminating quality that gave Lance's quiet smile such subtle magic. Paul was distinctly handsome in a big, wholesome way with strongly molded Saxon features and good coloring, and that, together with a fresh boyish charm, made him appear much younger than he really was. "I like Miss Webb first-rate when she's about, but I rarely even think of her when we're apart, which shows that I'm decidedly not in love with her," he explained. "I'm quite sure she feels the same way about me. We should grow deplorably tired of each other in a very short while if forced to live together continually, I'm afraid."

"In that case I shouldn't advise a marriage," said Lance quite seriously. "I do confess, though, that I've built pretty strongly on that hope in the past. She's such a pleasant, dependable little woman."

"Lance has the match-making instinct," Blanch laughed indolently.

"Not at all," Lance contradicted humbly, "but the fact that I am so

happily married makes me wish to see Paul similarly settled. I dare say he hasn't met the right girl yet, but he will, in time. I feel sure of that, because he's the marrying kind."

"If you should ever marry, Paul," said Blanch with deliberate seriousness, "follow Lance's example and give your wife absolute liberty of action, for that single condition will insure her happiness beyond the dreams of the average husband."

"You mean"—began Paul interestedly, when Lance broke in, with one of his fine smiles:

"She means, give your wife your entire trust," he said quietly, "no matter what the world may have said of her."

Blanch nodded, her cold blue eyes full of satisfaction. "Exactly," she approved. "When I was first married I dreaded the husbandly surveillance that I had heard so much about, to such a degree that it created a barrier of restraint between myself and Lance. You remember you found me a little—well, rather difficult," she added with a glance at her husband from whose face the light faded as the recollection of something painful assailed him. "I think a spirited woman loves personal liberty more than she loves all the combined luxuries that wealth can bestow."

"When a man and his wife understand each other as we do," said Lance with unconscious dignity, "there is not the slightest possibility of distrust on either side. Nothing—no array of evidences—could ever poison my mind against you."

Blanch turned to Paul with an airy smile, her momentary gravity quite gone. "All women who are not downright hideous have spiteful friends," she observed. "I have rather more than my share, it seems, and some of them have tried to make trouble by putting sultry rumors in Lance's way. And he has been so generous! If all men only knew how women love their husbands for that sort of thing there would be fewer divorces— Oh, I was really afraid that woman intended stopping here," she interrupted herself to

exclaim under her breath. "Thank heaven, I was mistaken!"

"I wish your neighbors would call on you, dear," said Lance a little wistfully, following the trim, substantial figure of the passing neighbor. "It would show a friendly interest in us, now that we're fixtures, as it were."

"The natives are such frumps, judging from their looks," Blanch declared with an approving glance at her own lacy skirts. "I shall send for my town friends when I grow lonely, which I don't really expect to do even in your absence, Lance, for I shall have no end of housewifely duties to occupy my time. Then there are the drives and the water. I do love paddling about by myself on sunny mornings."

"I wish you wouldn't go rowing alone," Lance begged earnestly. "The bay isn't like a river, remember; it's treacherous on account of ocean squalls. Take Yito along for safety, will you?"

"That would spoil my enjoyment completely. Don't be fussy, Lance, please! By the way, Paul, how do you like our lately acquired household treasure?" Blanch asked in a sudden change of tone.

"He's the most un-Asiatic Jap I ever saw," Paul declared. "Where on earth did you pick him up?"

"An old school-friend of mine, who happened to know that I wanted to try a Jap servant, sent Yito to us, merely as an experiment. We're in mortal fear of losing him, for he's too good to be true. Nothing is ever too difficult; he seems to require no diversions and he certainly possesses no vices. I feel as safe as can be with him about even when Cassandra goes out to moon with her various hotel beaux. Of course there isn't anything to be afraid of in this peaceful solitude, but even if the place hadn't such a placid record I shouldn't worry in the least with Yito within call."

When the trio went in to dinner a dark little man, who might very well have belonged to any Southern race, stood waiting behind Mrs. Cheswick's chair, his straight-set, black eyes half closed under humbly drooping lids. "The

reason we're dining so early this evening, Paul, is that we want to show you the sights of the Beach," Blanch explained as she seated herself with a billowing of lace and pale-blue gauze. "Oh, yes, there is a Beach, less than two miles away, with rival hotels of the swellest order. If you were staying over Sunday we'd go to a hotel dance tonight just for a lark."

"Next time be sure you come down for the week-end," Lance admonished. "Come *every* week-end, if possible. You'll always find us mighty glad to see you. If we should happen to be out, either driving or at the Beach, there'll be someone here to let you in."

"I shall not wait for another invitation, I do assure you," Paul answered heartily.

Paul watched the deft little manservant with keen curiosity during the progress of the meal, yet if the latter was conscious of the scrutiny bestowed upon him he made no sign, but placidly performed his duties. Later that evening, when Paul was on his way to the station with Lance seated beside him driving the safest of plump little phaeton ponies, it was on the tip of the guest's tongue to say that he had a vivid impression of having met the efficient Yito in a Colorado prospecting camp where the spry little man had served in the double capacity of camp cook and scout, but he restrained the impulse because he was not absolutely certain of his memory. "It would only worry old Lance to have his suspicions aroused," he said to himself, "and after all I may be mistaken, as I saw that man Mason only three times. Yito certainly does bear a strong resemblance to Dick Mason, though."

Two weeks passed before Paul as much as heard from Lance Cheswick, who had meanwhile assumed an arduous burden in the way of a widow's badly managed investment, which necessitated several tiresome out-of-town trips; then a very kind 'phone message came to Paul urging him to go down to the Cheswick home for the week-end, which he promised to do. "I'm terribly pushed just now," Lance ex-

plained in a dragged-out voice, "and I may be late getting away on Saturday, so don't wait for me, but take the first convenient train down. There is a remote possibility that I'll be kept away till Sunday morning, for I'm absolutely obliged to go up to Sedgford to meet that scoundrelly lawyer of Mrs. Fields, and if he keeps me waiting there's no telling what may happen. The trains out there are not fit for modern requirements. Anyhow, I'll make a strong effort to get home before Sunday morning. I'll wire Blanch that you're coming, so that she'll have something to look forward to in case I have to disappoint her."

Paul Embery was not unusually imaginative, but he had a curious sense of unrest every time he thought of that week-end visit, and when Saturday morning brought an unexpected call to Trenton in behalf of an obstinate business deal, he seized the opportunity to cancel his engagement with the Cheswicks by sending Blanch an explanatory telegram stating that unless he should be fortunate enough to return to New York in time to take the five o'clock train for the country he would defer his visit till the following Saturday. However, the Trenton business proved to be hardly better than a hoax, so Paul found himself under the disagreeable necessity of reporting to his partner, who led him an exhausting chase from office to office all that sweltering, humid July day; consequently night found him in the exact mood thoroughly to enjoy the over-Sunday quiet of Cheswick's home. In consideration of his friend's oft-repeated invitation to "take pot-luck at any and all times," Paul unhesitatingly boarded the last train for Teller's Landing. He had a great longing for the cool stillness of the little white house in the woods, with the soothing murmur of the sea just beyond its home-like doors.

The hands of the station clock marked the half hour past ten when Paul set off on his short country walk, grip in hand. The air was cool and sweet with country fragrance; he removed his hat and let the night-wind sweep across his fore-

head as he tramped along, his weariness fast disappearing under the all-pervading balm of Nature. The little, white house looked very peaceful and inviting as he turned up the rose-bordered path; there were no lights in any of the low, broad windows and no sounds from within, except a monotonous droning for which he could not account, so he concluded that the whole household had retired in consideration of Lance's unusual fatigue. He touched the bell reluctantly, for he disliked disturbing the night's tranquillity, hoping that the ubiquitous Yito would hear the faint trill and admit the late guest without waking the Cheswicks. He found himself wondering, as he waited in the quiet dusk, at the complete transformation which marriage had wrought in Blanch by divesting her of her social unrest so entirely that she was able to content herself with the domestic retirement that her husband delighted in.

His ring went unanswered so long that he pressed the bell a trifle more loudly. Still no one appeared. The third ring was loud and prolonged enough to have awakened the ordinary slumbers of Cassandra, the colored cook, who had inherited from her Congo relatives such decided symptoms of the "sleeping disease," that she invariably dozed at all times when not engaged in active occupation. That night, however, her slumbers were more than usually profound, owing to the presence of a little pungent-smelling flask that lay beside her—empty. She slept on with the bell whirring piercingly above her door.

"The folks must have gone down to the Beach," said Paul to himself after a last futile effort with the bell. "Evidently this is the servant's night off, but someone will be getting back soon, so I'll settle myself comfortably out here."

The veranda chairs were less comfortable than usual; Paul tried them all before he went around to a little side porch where Blanch usually took her noon siesta in a deep hammock behind a fragrant screen of cinnamon vines, and there he found exactly what

he wanted in the way of bodily luxury. Quite unconsciously he had carried his traveling grip with him from the front of the house, for so accustomed was he to guarding his bag and umbrella from the hurly-burly accidents of travel that it had become second nature to keep them both within arm's length when not safely deposited behind hotel doors. He did not intend to sleep, for he wanted to proclaim his presence the moment the Cheswicks returned from their evening stroll, but within a very few moments his will became submerged in a delightful drowsiness which was not at all disturbed by Yito's quiet fumbling with the back door latch half an hour later, nor by the rumbling snores of Cassandra in her open-windowed upper room. It was the hoarse cough of an automobile that woke Paul. He roused very suddenly, remembering where he was without an instant's confusion, and at that moment a huge machine came to a standstill beside the Cheswick gate and as the puff-puff of the machine stopped a woman's clear voice rang into the sudden pause. It was Blanch Cheswick who spoke, but the man who answered her was not Lance.

"I might run it down the lane between the two houses in case anyone should stray along and wonder at its presence at this late hour," the man suggested. "We may as well avoid neighborhood talk, you know."

"Very well," Blanch commanded calmly.

From his dim nook behind the cinnamon vines Paul watched the shadowy bulk of the machine glide away, conscious of a curious fullness of his brain region, for he knew unerringly that he had stumbled across his friend's impending doom, and although he was not surprised at the eminent fulfilment of his ineradicable suspicions concerning the woman upon whom Lance had centered all his hopes of life and death and immortality, the blow struck hard. He waited with set teeth and presently the man returned and joined Blanch on the veranda steps where the rose border screened them from outside observation, yet gave them an air of respectable

domesticity in the event of Lance's appearance. They conversed in low, easy tones which Paul had some difficulty in hearing, and which could not possibly have been understood from the roadway.

"You mustn't say unkind things about Lance," said Blanch presently, with condescending kindness, "for he has a heart of gold notwithstanding his trying limitations. He has used me exquisitely in spite of that damaging episode with you shortly after my marriage."

"He's all kinds of a good soul in his stolid way," the man admitted with a smile that made itself distinctly felt by the man in the hammock, "but in thinking of you two as lifelong mates one cannot help reverting to the old simile about casting pearls before—"

"Hush!" Blanch had the decency to interrupt. "Besides, *you* were none too appreciative when those same pearls were within your reach," she added with a tinge of bitterness.

"My dearest girl, haven't I succeeded in exonerating myself from that flagrantly hostile charge yet?" the man asked appealingly. "If you knew what a devil I had to fight in that fearful struggle for liberty you would have forgiven that brief neglect long ago. It was utterly impossible for me to do anything but barely exist while that woman's clutches were at my throat. Then, too, I knew you would be safe from all annoyances under Cheswick's highly dependable protection. It was unspeakably dreadful to yield you up to any other man for even the briefest moment, but Lance—well, I must give him credit for being one man in a billion."

"I wish he wasn't so—so angelic!" Blanch broke out with sudden passion.

"How unreasonable you are, dearest! With any other man in the world you would have suffered tortures."

"I should have killed either myself or any other man," Blanch cried out harshly, forgetting caution for the moment. "If Lance had been in your place, Rex, he would have stormed the very gates of hell to save me from what

you led me into with an easy conscience."

"Upon my word, Blanch, you wrong me," the man protested with great seriousness. "I did what I could to make this temporary marriage endurable even to sending twice around the world for the only person I knew of who could safely assume the rôle of go-between for us during my enforced absence. I only wish I had been able to find Mason sooner, for I realized keenly all along how lonely and dull you would be while I was away."

"Well, well, Rex, I suppose I shall have to put up with what you are instead of what I want you to be," Blanch sighed.

"Indeed, when I have you for my very own, my love, I'll be very nearly what you want me to be, however difficult that may be," Rex promised fervently. "The trouble with you, Blanch, is that you do not trust me absolutely or you would give everything over into my hands at this very moment, knowing that I would do my utmost to further your happiness."

"You keep forgetting how worldly-wise I am," Blanch said in a hardened voice. "Besides having a decided distaste for vulgar scandal such as an elopement would cause, I admit that I do *not* trust you as fully as I trust my own sound judgment, for instance. Everything must be carried out according to law and precedents. There will be no difficulty in breaking with Lance, for he will give me my freedom for the asking. I promise to marry you an hour after I receive my divorce decree."

A brief pause ensued during which the flame of a match spurted across the starlit gloom as Rex lighted a cigar. "I feel like a cad about letting you bear the brunt of that scene with Lance," he complained.

"There will be no scene," Blanch replied coldly. "I shall tell him what I want the next time we meet, which will be on Friday afternoon, for he won't be down till then. He will not say a single word to hurt or offend me, I assure you."

"Wouldn't it be best to half-way prepare him by letter so that the thing won't come too suddenly?" Rex suggested uneasily.

"I'll think about it. In the meanwhile you may settle your affairs in readiness for a long absence—a very long one, mind, Rex, for I am positively at the end of my endurance after sixteen months of his hideous domesticity. I shall want to go everywhere and do everything to get the taste of stagnation out of my mouth."

Paul Embury, the complacent, easy-going man of the world, waxed suddenly savage in spirit as he listened to his friend's death-sentence, and from that primal fierceness evolved an astounding transformation that stripped him of conventionality and love of tranquillity at the same instant that his elemental passions leaped from their life-long slumber. He realized, with a wrench of affection almost overpowering in its intensity, that his friend's disaster had pierced some vital part of himself, and that first furious pang of suffering gave birth to a wild impulse to inflict violent physical punishment on the cause of his agony, but he checked that brutal craving for vengeance by a great effort of will, because of its inadequacy.

"For just one hour, Almighty God," he prayed with horrible fervor, "give me the wisdom of a sage and the might of ten strong men."

He heard no farewells, but a sudden snort of the motor told him that Rex had gone his way into the silent distance. After a moment a door creaked gently on its hinges and before it had closed behind Blanch—Paul had leaped to her side. She uttered a little moan of fright as he grasped her thinly covered arm and spoke his own name raucously.

"Why, Paul, *how* you frightened me!" she exclaimed, tremblingly grasping at his free hand for support. "Why didn't you speak before?"

He closed the door and reached for the light-swivel and turned on the current, flooding the hall and the adjoining reception-room with a clear white

radiance which showed how ghastly pale he was.

"Are you ill?" she faltered, with fresh alarm, for his appearance was indeed terrifying.

"Come," he commanded in a voice of iron, drawing her toward a chair by force of habit, but kicking it aside the moment she reached it. "Face the light so that no words need be wasted between us, for you are so hateful to me that I would not spend one unnecessary moment in your vampire presence for the world's wealth. If it were not for what Lance would suffer through your violent death I should kill you now, in the most utterly cruel way possible to human power. Yes, you do well to shrink and cringe, for from this hour I shall be your implacable enemy to the day of your death—you despicable traitress!"

His hands gripped the soft flesh of her arms like iron clamps, yet she was curiously unaware of physical pain, so acute was her fear of the man who had suddenly changed from an amiable, entertaining friend to an appallingly ferocious foe, whose furious hatred of her flamed in every feature of his distorted face. It came to her, in a sickening flash, that he had overheard her conversation with the man whom she had long wanted to marry, and for whose sordid sake she had deliberately elected to break and cast aside a true and noble heart.

"At this moment," he went on with hot bitterness that seemed to scorch the blood in her throbbing veins, "I could joyfully tear out your very heart to satisfy my intense loathing of you. But there is Lance to consider. He must be spared the final desolation that you have planned for him. I am his *friend*. Do you know the meaning of that word, you vampire? No, of course not, for there is nothing but greed and lust and deceit in your stagnant heart. Nevertheless you *shall* learn something about the friendship between man and man unless you obey my dictates to the last letter, for, failing in that you shall taste of worse than death as certain as God lends me life and reason, for I shall not

spare you any torture that mortal ingenuity can devise. You are to go out of Lance's life in a way that will leave him forever at peace about your memory. Before Friday of next week your allies, the sham Jap, and the detestable brute who has just left you, shall help you in the preparations of such carefully formulated plans for your ostensible drowning that the truth will never be suspected. There will be rough days between now and then, when a carelessly managed rowboat might easily capsize in a lonely curve of the bay where some intimately personal belonging of yours must be found—a hat or a wrap, anything closely associated with your daily life. You follow me clearly, do you?"

The woman nodded mutely. Her face was absolutely without color, like a death-mask with blue, glittering eyes staring through in frozen terror.

"And in the meanwhile you are to write Lance a letter full of golden lies that shall stay with him forever: a letter of affectionate regret at his enforced absence of tonight and of joyful expectations in the ever-present thought of having him with you very soon. You will write that letter at my dictation, in my presence, and it is to be left in my care. I shall stay within call of you until the drowning ruse has been successfully carried out, after which you may go your own evil way. But I warn you to go very, very far off, so that no possible chance will ever bring you into touch with Lance or any of his friends, for should that ever happen I will make your life the most miserable thing in all the world, so help me Almighty God! You believe me, do you?"

"Yes." It was the merest whisper. Her mind was incapable of reasoning as to what possible course Paul might pursue in his rage against her, but she realized that absolute obedience to his iron commands was imperative for her physical safety. The foiling of her smug plans to defer to the laws of propriety and precedents in order to secure her future by a legitimate marriage with Rex seemed of small importance compared with the probable outcome of

Paul's vengeful wrath. "Yes, I believe you," she echoed starkly.

"Then you will carefully avoid making mistakes in the way of an appeal to your two allies," he warned, "for neither the wealth of the one nor the cleverness of the other can avert, in the smallest measure, what I shall have in store for you in case of your disobedience. I have nothing further to say to you tonight. Tomorrow you will write the letter I spoke of."

No detail of Paul's golden lie failed. The letter, which was a masterpiece of the heart in its eloquent simplicity, reached Lance on Tuesday morning as he sat poring over a nerve-racking project by which he hoped to save his widowed client from financial disaster, and busy as he was he paused to open and read the missive, and having done that he withdrew for a few sacred moments to a little inner sanctum, where he yielded himself to such poignant emotions that tears came involuntarily to his eyes. On Wednesday the heart-breaking telegram came—from Yito—and Lance went out to meet his dark hour alone. Paul followed a day later. He found his stricken friend in the little blue-and-white bed-room that Blanch had left in dainty morning order when she turned her back upon her husband's home for the last time, standing with bowed shoulders before the window that looked out upon the sparkling curve of the bay where the overturned boat had been discovered within a few hours of Blanch's departure. Ten, twenty years had been added to Lance's bereaved life, but he bore himself with patient dignity under his crushing load. He was not without consolation, for her last letter lay close against his aching heart. She was still eternally his, although her beautiful body had gone out with the devouring tide.

"No, I shall not go away, Paul," Lance said in answer to the question that came when the silence grew intolerable. "Right here, where she lived and enjoyed life so radiantly, I shall feel most at home, for she will never be absent in spirit. I feel that she

would wish me to stay. Nothing will ever be the same—oh, never, never in all this changed world—but I want to be as near to her as possible for the rest of my life. I had a letter from her only yesterday. And such a letter! An angel of God must have inspired her to open her heart to me for the very first time in our married life, in behalf of what was in store for me. She rarely wrote me and never unconventionally, for she was instinctively reserved, you know. You may read the letter, Paul. You loved her, too, I know."

Paul took the proffered letter silently, but in his heart a little pæan of thanksgiving went up to the most high heaven. It took a long while to read the closely written record of a woman's endless love. As Paul at last refolded the letter he glanced up to meet the solemn gaze

of Yito, who had crept up to announce the evening meal.

"Yes, yes, Yito," Lance answered patiently. "We'll be down directly." But he turned back to the sunset view on the waters which were to him the grave of love and hope and desire; whereupon the little inscrutable man who had lent himself to obliquity for money was suddenly moved to lay his soiled heart on the altar of unblemished love.

"As long as I can serve him I will never leave him, so help me God!" he murmured in a broken voice.

Paul reached out and gripped the servant's hand. "I beg your forgiveness for past injustice," he whispered. "We will watch over our friend together and, please God, no glimmer of the truth shall ever desecrate the white holiness of his sorrow."



HENRI MURGER

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

SLOWLY the Winter has drained our blood, cold as we sat in the cheerless room,

Log by log has the pile burned down—they were grown when the earth was all abloom.

Bread has been scanty and song ill-paid, rags have our garments all become;
The face of the landlord is gaunt and stern with brooding over the unpaid sum.
Lips have trembled and eyes have filled, hearts have ached at the hunger of hearts,

Slowly the Winter has drained our blood, and slow starvation has plied its arts.
Spring? Is it Spring? Can the warm sap run to feed the tender, delicate leaf?
Where is Musette of yesterday? Hunger's a rare old, wary thief!

Spring may come or the sun may fail—I am spent and gray with the Winter's hoar,

Log by log has the pile burned down, and the last sparks die on the blackened floor.

Cold as I sat in the cheerless room, I said in my heart 'twas a bitter thing,
That little Musette with her brave thin smile should live thro' the Winter to die in the Spring!

THE BETTER RIGHT

By Johnson Morton

THE house stood on high ground. In front a terraced lawn broke sharply to a broadening valley, where willows marked the slow course of a river throbbing across its breast like a great artery of nourishment and life. Beyond the meadows hills of varied green, banded with cornfields and crowned with pine trees, cast their sharp outlines against the vague shapes of mountains that clouded the horizon.

It was to this view that Hannah Le Fevre's eyes turned always for refreshment, as each afternoon, when the work of the day was over, she came down through the gate at the top of the terrace to walk among her flowers. A change, indeed, this silent, scented garden, lying warm and sunny between its hedges, from the noisy activity of the mill which she had left on the other side of the grounds, among its shops and cottages, only a stone's throw off, but hidden by carefully planted trees.

Mrs. Le Fevre's father, old Alexander Hoadley, who built the great woollen-mill and the village that clung about it, had spent his life there like a kindly monarch: ruler and father of this small commercial kingdom among the Vermont hills. Now he had been dead for ten years, but the affairs of the mill had gone on prospering in his daughter's hand. An only child, brought up strictly by her father as his hereditary successor, she had developed into a calm, reserved woman of business, with the taste and the equipment for her unusual task. She worked incessantly and her people had grown by degrees to expect of her nothing else than a daily round of inspiring, helpful management and the strict yet friendly supervision which she always gave to their affairs, when suddenly she announced one day that

she was tired and was going to Europe. She did not come back for six months and a letter received by the superintendent shortly before her arrival brought astonishment. Miss Hoadley had married and her husband was returning with her! In that letter Hannah had stated the fact, but had given no details; this was her habit. But she had, of course, used her new name, and its sound, as the tidings flew from mill to cottage, had evoked the suspiciousness of anything foreign inherent at the heart of every true New Englander. "It's a queer mouthful, that 'Le Fevre,'" said old John Bumstead, gardener and factotum for years at the "Mansion," as he put a detaining foot on the step of the superintendent's buggy when it turned to the road. "I'm worried and I'm kind o' fearful of results, Mr. Chandler. Why, 'tain't natural for no lady to put up with one o' them Frenchmen! Sounds to me like he even might be a *Canuck*, I don't mind telling ye!"

The superintendent had laughed and reassured him, but when the old man turned away he drove on slowly, conscious all at once of a vague uneasiness. "I wonder what *will* come of it," he thought. "I'm afraid, I'm fearful of results, too! She is a woman, after all, though she hasn't been brought up like one, and she's never had her chance at the kind of life that women really want. I've said I'd trust her judgment anywhere, and I suppose I've got to trust it here. But judgment ain't everything, and when a woman waits till forty to take what she ought to have had at twenty, it means that she cares too little—or—*too much!* I only hope that Hannah's kept her bearings."

All this had happened more than a year before, and gradually the resentful

air of the little community—no rural New Englander ever wholly forgives not being consulted prior to the fact—had softened to a tolerance that held out promises of enthusiasm. For this the tact of Jules Le Fevre was responsible. He let it be known that he had no intention of interfering with the affairs of the mill, a contingency which had at first alarmed the mill people; but his out-of-town activities and his interest in the farm showed that he was no nonentity. His good looks, of an Anglo-Saxon type in spite of his French name, and the winning charm of his manners, more elaborate than was the New England village standard, and at first to be regarded as a disadvantage, soon worked like leaven in the loaf of his personal relations. Old Bumstead himself was a pioneer in casting aside prejudice. He did so noisily. "Blue eyes and a yaller mustache and a chest on him, and grippin' your hand when he shakes!" cried he. "Huh! there ain't much of a foreigner about Mr. Le Fevre but his name. Why, he's like *folks*!"

This winning charm of her husband's nature, a quality unmet with before in her experience, and consequently regarded as something sacredly individual, made always a strong appeal to Hannah Le Fevre. Like many a childless woman in whose nature the maternal impulse beat high, she had gradually come to assume toward the husband she loved an attitude of protection, as if recognizing the perpetual boy that lives at the heart of every man. She stood, generous and selfish in the same thought, between him and the things that she felt might dull his light spirit's edge. She took a double burden of responsibility—wholly unconscious that, with the load, she bore as well another's birth-right! The gentler nature of Jules Le Fevre seemed to yield easily to his wife's more dominant one, and only rare flashes of impatience and occasional hints of reserve might have made it apparent that the pressure was felt. In a year the situation had become one where love, by the very insistence of its devotion, bade fair to dis-

turb the delicate equality of relations held in balance by something quite as fine as love itself, the just recognition of individual rights.

On this warm June afternoon Hannah had left the mill later than was her habit and more than usually wearied by the work of the day. She closed the gate behind her and found in the garden a grateful haven of relief! The lengthening shadows on the paths refreshed her. The cool, soft air blowing along the hills across the valley came with solace to her burning cheeks: and from the flowers at her feet crept up a double balm of color and of fragrance. She stood for a long time, a part of the silence, looking into the distance where a last flare of the sunset fluttered in a haze of gold. Gradually the lines of her face, at first tense and deep, softened and faded away and with the change came a sort of restlessness. She turned at each suggestion of sound, each unfulfilled hint of an approach. Then, as she caught sight of some weeds that a gardener had overlooked, her strong habit of activity asserted itself and she knelt to pull them up. Spikes of young foxglove, just breaking into blossom, brushed white and pink against her black gown. She moved among the flowers delicately; her touch held tenderness. But at a sound, at last definite, unmistakable, she looked up suddenly to smile and wave her hand. It was for this that she had been waiting. Her husband came down the steps of the terrace and at once the moment grew complete! Le Fevre had just returned from a plunge in the river. His fair, sunburned face was flushed with the exercise and his hair curled damply on his forehead. His coat lay over his arm; his pale blue shirt hung open at the throat and its sleeves were turned back from his wrists. As he came nearer his answering smile flashed over white teeth. He bent and kissed his wife; then flung himself at full length on the grass beside her.

"This is good!" He stretched his arms and legs luxuriously. "Somehow swimming takes it out of a fellow!

You've no idea how strong the current is: really it pulled on me."

He caught at something in Hannah's look.

"But what's the matter with you, dearest?" he cried. "You seem tired to death!"

There was a ring of impatience, almost boyish, back of the real solicitude of his tone.

"Why on earth do you stay in-doors so much? You ought to have been riding over the farm with me this afternoon instead of slaving in that beastly mill."

Hannah stood up. It had been her intention to rally her husband on his laziness; but, when her eyes met his, she was conscious of an answering annoyance and replied, not to his question, but to a sudden sharp apprehension of her own.

"Jules, dear," she spoke reproachfully. "How can you be so imprudent! Don't you know that you oughtn't to lie on the damp ground when you're so warm?"

Le Fevre sat up quickly with a mock air of obedience; but his laugh and the whimsical movement of his shoulder failed to hide a fresh suggestion of impatience.

"Stuff and nonsense," he declared, "you treat me as if I had no sense of my own! Really, Hannah, sometimes I believe that you think I'm still a baby boy."

"Sometimes—you are!"

Hannah's tone had caught the crispness of her husband's. She remembered all at once what his coming had made her forget: that she *was* tired; that her head ached; that her mind was clinging persistently to some details of troublesome business at the mill. And she realized anew, on the instant she had spoken, that every nerve in her body was vibrating almost beyond the point of her control. So she took refuge, as her habit was, in silence, turning again to the bed of fox-gloves.

On the impressionable nature of her husband any silence of Hannah produced always an effect that she was

quite unable to apprehend. Now it seemed to him, more than ever, a protest, a rebuke. He misconstrued her restraint as obstinacy. He resented her controlled calmness; which served to fire him with another access of impatience, disproportionate to the cause, as even he could recognize, but none the less irresistible. He sprang to his feet at once, flinging his coat across his shoulders.

"It's quite absurd, your treating me like this," he began. "I won't be ignored like a child. You have no right to snub me as you might one of your workmen, when I don't happen to agree with you. See here, Hannah," his voice rose with excitement, "you're awfully annoying. I wish, at least, that you'd *look* at me when I'm speaking. I've got something to say to you. There's more at the bottom of this. Do you know that I really believe you're annoyed with me just because I've decided to start without you, tonight, on that fishing trip with the Pennocks and the rest?"

"Jules!"

Hannah's voice controlled itself, but the eyes that looked up at her husband held, had he been able to recognize it, the warning light that precedes the hurt anger of the reserved.

"You are not fair," she went on calmly. "I thought we had talked that out and quite settled it. You know well enough that it is impossible for me to go at this time. I can't get away. Of course, dear, I should have preferred going with you later on, if you could have put off the trip; but I'm really glad that you're going now—I've said so all along—that is, if you *want* to go without me."

She regretted these last words as soon as spoken; but all too late. Their effect on Le Fevre was instantaneous.

"That's just it!" he cried. "You take away every bit of my pleasure in doing the things that you have some strange idea you don't want me to do, by letting me see how plainly you disapprove! And you always contrive somehow to put me in the wrong. I have to bear the blame. Do you know that you

make me feel guilty—positively guilty half the time?”

Hannah's face flushed. Her wavering control suddenly gave way again to the pressure of a question that her rising anger put.

“And are you perfectly sure that you're *not* guilty half the time?”

Her husband, already striding down the path, stopped short. He turned and came toward her.

“What a beastly thing to say to me, Hannah,” he retorted. “You don't deserve an answer. Only I want you to know, once and for all, that you are treating me quite wrong in little things as well as big. Why, I don't feel free to go with my friends on a perfectly natural, perfectly innocent fishing trip! I don't feel free even to lie on the grass when I'm tired. I have to do just what you tell me. When you pull my rope, I move. It's ridiculous! I don't mean to be hard on you, Hannah, because I love you—and I know that you love me; but, by George, you're fast making a nonentity of me. You never allow me to forget for a moment that I am your husband, but you forget yourself, every hour of the day that, first of all, I'm a man. Now as for this trip, I tell you frankly that I shall do just what I promised and you can like it or not as you choose.” He had grown calmer and his voice matched the decision of his words. He looked at his watch. “So if I'm going to Belden to spend the night there at the Pennocks' in time for the early start, we really ought to be dressing for dinner now.”

Hannah made no reply; but she rose at once and started to walk quickly toward the house. Le Fevre followed, but to her surprise, he did not, as she had grown to expect, apologize with an access of tenderness for what had happened. Instead, at the door he had stopped abruptly, and, after a pause that gave strong import to his words, had spoken with a strange new note of decision in his voice—a note that made his wife turn to him sharply.

“Hannah, I am quite right about the matter. I'm sorry if I've hurt you—

but you *must* see that the time has come for me to assert myself.”

Yet at dinner his manner was uneasy and restrained. He laughed much, and talked intermittently of things remote, struggling all the while against the impulse of an affectionate nature that was ever eager to give back what it had gained at the expense of another's comfort.

Hannah, on the contrary, seemed to have recovered completely her poise. She discussed the fishing-trip with interest. And afterward, when the trap that was to take her husband to Belden came to the door, she herself superintended the disposition of his bags and fishing-tackle. Her arms clung closely about his neck as she bade him good-bye. Then after she had watched him drive down the avenue and out of sight she closed the door and went at once to the library, where the sight of her littered desk, under its green-shaded lights, called her to work. In a few moments, busy with figures and estimates, she was bending over her books.

Half an hour later she looked up at the sound of a knock. A house-maid stood in the doorway. “If you please, ma'am, there's a lady in the drawing-room who wants to see you. She wouldn't give me her name, only I was to tell you that she came on business!”

II

A FIGURE in black rose from a chair as Hannah came into the room. Against the glow of shaded lights its slender contours seemed those of youth; but an instant later, to her surprise, Hannah found herself confronting a woman of her own age. The stranger's hair was touched with gray; her thin face held the pallor of illness, and not even the sharp brilliancy of her smile could contradict the depression of her lips.

Hannah, yielding to a sudden impulse of dislike, contrived not to take the hand held out with such assurance of manner that its mere offering seemed, somehow, to reverse the position of the two women. Instead, she spoke

abruptly, using, instinctively, the courteous but coolly impersonal tone habitual to her at the mill.

"Do you wish to speak with me on business?"

The stranger started in quick response. She shrugged her shoulders and smiled again.

"Ah! now I have made you angry!" The words, spoken slowly as if chosen carefully from a language not her own, seemed to verge upon an implication and to ignore the question itself. "I can see that you do not like me; but was it to be expected?"

"You are not answering me," Hannah persisted, "and I confess I do not understand you." She spoke briskly as she pointed to a chair and drew another in front of it. "Let us waste no more time. Sit down, please, and tell me what it is that I can do for you. I do not even know your name."

"I had a very good reason for not sending it in to you." The stranger, leaning forward, was regarding Hannah closely.

"What do you mean?"

"I did not give you my name, because I knew that to hear it suddenly would alarm you. My name is the same as your own, madame; at least, the one that you call yourself. I am *Mrs. Jules Le Fevre*!"

She broke off abruptly, with a dramatic sweep of the hands, to bend the ardor of her eyes on Hannah's face. But she misread, utterly, the character of her listener, for, in the level gaze that met her own she found no trace of the effect she had meant to produce. Instead, she was conscious of a baffling reserve, a poise that disconcerted, a judgment, at the bar of which she felt instinctively that an appeal must fight well to prove its claim.

Hannah straightened herself before she spoke again. Her hands lay quietly in her lap. A faint smile accented her words. "Are you asking me to believe that you are Amélie Beauvois, my husband's first wife, who drowned herself in the lake of Geneva more than ten years ago?"

"I *was* Amélie Beauvois. I *am*

Amélie Le Fevre, as truly as there is a God in heaven!"

"I have read the newspaper accounts of the finding of Amélie Le Fevre's body," Hannah's calm voice went on in monotone. "My husband has shown me the letter that she wrote him when she ran away, and I myself have seen her grave in the little cemetery outside the city of Geneva. So, really, I'm afraid that I must ask you, if you persist in your story, to give me some tangible proofs."

The other had opened a small bag drawn from the bosom of her gown. She held out a package with a laugh. "There," she cried; "you see I am not unprepared. Here are my proofs, *credentials*, I think you say. Among them you will find what I believe you do not *want* to find: a copy of the record of my birth; the certificate of my marriage; *enfin*—all that will prove me to be what you do not think I am. But rest a moment," she stretched a detaining hand. "Do not open the packet yet! I will leave it with you; keep the papers and read them when I am gone. You see, I trust you. But let me speak now; let me tell you why I came here. I can see you are a just woman, and, although you hate me, I think that, when you shall hear what I have to say, you will understand." Her voice, seizing on Hannah's silence as a support, mounted rapidly. "You know about my life with Jules Le Fevre—the failure of it. You have heard his version; I need not tell you mine. But I *am* going to tell you something. Jules Le Fevre is a good man, a charming man, but a weak one; and the women whom he loves must be of the type that, of necessity, masters him to his hurt and their own! Such was my experience and I have the idea"—she turned to the other sharply—"that you are quite able to know what I mean. At first I was very happy—Jules is an adorable lover, is he not?—but as time went on, his very devotion seemed to come between us. He grew to defer to me in everything, while I—was it not what you call *inevitable*?—became the more exacting. It was quite as if he

had been a child, madame, and I a jealous mother. Sometimes he grew restless under my control—if only he had *beaten* me, it would have been well for us both! But there'd follow, at the most, a burst of temper and then he'd come back penitent—though it was I who had been at fault—penitent and more devoted than ever! I got to *expect* what always happened—to one of my mind that is fatal—and at the last it grew to *ennuyer* me. There were other things, of course, of which I shall not speak, a very bitter quarrel, for reasons on both sides, perhaps, and then . . . I left him! Among those papers," she leaned forward to touch the packet in Hannah's lap, "you will find an account of what happened to me. I have written it out. It is all there—a melodrama, if you will—but every word of it is true! And you—you cannot care to know of the wretched woman, shivering in the cold, to whom I gave my cloak as I hurried along the shore of the lake—the cloak that served me a good turn by seeming to prove my identity, when that woman's body was found weeks later. You do not care—"

"I care to hear nothing," Hannah's voice interrupted coldly, "because I do not yet believe you. Let us start where we began, with my first question. What do you want of *me*? My husband?"

The stranger's face colored deep, as if with anger. "No," she cried, "a thousand times, no! I have done with Jules Le Fevre forever."

Then, in a sudden change of mood, her voice faltered, she clasped her hands nervously and seemed to recover herself only with effort.

"I want something very different," she hesitated. "Ah! I thought it would be easy to ask you; but I find it hard—hard! . . . Madame, I want . . . *money*!"

"It is, then, as I supposed; *black-mail*!"

Hannah rose at once and walked across the room. But the other, anticipating her intention, stood already between her and the bell, thrusting out her arms in a passion of supplication.

"Ah, madame, do not order your servants to turn me from your house before I have finished!" she cried. "You are cruel, cruel; but you *shall* hear me. Listen! I want no *blackmail*, as you call it; I am not an adventuress. I am as good a woman as you are. It is only my need that has brought me to this. You are rich; you cannot comprehend what it is to have nothing. I have used up everything that I possess in the world: the small sum of money that came to me from my mother: my savings, all that I had earned by working. You wonder why I do not go to work again? Ah, I am not able to work because I am ill. If you have eyes, you must see that for yourself, madame, for they tell me it is written on my face! There are papers among those in your hand that will prove this to you—if you want proof; will tell you *how* ill I am. I cannot live more than a year longer—the doctors declare that is all I can expect—but, for that year, I *must* have the money to live somehow! This is the reason, madame, why I have come to you."

She brushed aside again Hannah's attempt to interrupt her.

"No, no, madame," she hurried on, "that is not all I must say to you. I lost track of Jules Le Fevre for years. I heard nothing, nothing, till suddenly I learned of his marriage to you after it had taken place. Ah, if I had only known before, I should have spoken. I swear it; for I could wish you no ill through any fault of mine. But, afterward, was it not too late? '*N'importe*,' I said, 'it will distress her, that other woman, who loves him.' I thought that all would yet come right! But all has gone wrong, madame. Life, it is not as one may plan. Only six months ago I came to Montreal—I have a cousin there—a doctor, and I thought he could help me. It was my last hope—and a vain one. He could do nothing for my health, nothing. He was kind; but he had power to give me no aid because he is himself a poor man . . . Montreal is not far off, madame. The fame of your wonderful mills has gone there. I heard of your success, your riches,

and, suddenly, I thought out this plan! You see I could impose myself on my cousin no longer; that was impossible. I counted my money carefully. It seemed to me that there was enough. I came to your town across the river. I took a room in the hotel there and I waited for a chance to see you alone; waited for three days. Yesterday I heard them say—they talk much, these villagers—that Jules Le Fevre was to spend this night there. That was my chance, madame, and I have taken it. I knew that you would be alone. So I have come to you with my facts and you shall see that they *are* facts when you read the papers. I do not ask for charity, because I will not beg. I do not ask for justice, because I will not threaten. But, let me tell you that, by tomorrow night, when I shall have paid for my room and for the carriage that is waiting now at your door, I shall not have a *sou* left, not a *sou*! Ah, madame, I *must* live for the months that the good God still allows me, and so I have come to you. It shall all be between ourselves. Jules Le Fevre need never know it and in a year or less it shall all be forgotten by you, like a dream! You will see that I ask only the barest sum—it will be as nothing to you—you have it all in writing, madame. Ah, you *must* understand! There is no one else in the world to whom I can turn. Don't you see the horror of it? If I have not money to *live*, why, I must *die*. And I must seek death for myself; the track of the railroad, perhaps, or the river! Ah, do not force me to this, madame, for the good God's sake! It is a mortal sin—to take one's life: it is not forgiven. I shudder—for I am a good woman, a good Catholic, madame, a *religieuse*—I shudder and I cross myself!"

III

AFTER her visitor had gone, Hannah went back to the library. That, instead of setting to work again at her books, she stayed in the room only long enough

to push them within the desk and shut its cover was the sole sign of agitation in the current of her thought. She stopped at the foot of the stairs to give some household orders for the next day. She even detained the maid to make kindly inquiry for the health of the girl's invalid mother. But once within her own room, with the hurried locking of the door behind her, her manner underwent a change. Her face flushed and her hands trembled about the packet, held so easily before. She untied its fastenings. The papers were arranged with a care that challenged her admiration, because it was so like her own. Yet this very fact stirred a sense of foreboding. . . . She read the documents in order. They were all quite as the other woman had described them, scrupulously exact in detail and attested when necessary: the certificate of birth; a copy of Amélie's marriage license and a long account of her subsequent life, her resources, her expenses—sworn to before a notary. This paper Hannah read many times and the effect was disquieting; for, from the bald statements of events, from the simple enumeration of facts rose, struggle against its coming as she might, a strong conviction of truth. . . .

She sighed, and, putting down the documents, opened in turn the last paper. This was an affidavit from a physician, the cousin in Canada, who stated that Amélie Beauvois suffered from an incurable disease—Hannah shuddered as she saw its name—that its progress must be rapid and its termination fatal. . . . From the pages, as she turned them, a sheet of thin paper fluttered to the floor. Hannah bent to pick it up. Its date was that of the day before and the handwriting that covered it, fine and exact, was evidently Amélie's own.

I ask you to give me seven hundred dollars of money. That will be enough for my purpose. I have calculated with care—everything. I can stay near my cousin. The cost will be small. I promise you that I shall waste nothing. This money shall cover all; my *pension*, my clothes, my medicine, and it shall leave something, perhaps, for my burial. You will not grudge me that! I shall go no more into reasons: for

when you read this I shall have talked with you. I think that you will understand. In return, I give you my solemn word, my vow of honor, that you shall never see or hear from me again. There shall be, if you wish, just a notification sent when . . . it is over. Jules Le Fevre need never apprehend: it is our own *affaire*, our secret . . . Ah, I know not if there be anything of wickedness in this: but, if to you I seem to do wrong, madame, surely the good God shall pardon me! It is but doing evil that benefit may come, and for that there is easy absolution . . . It is necessary that I fulfil my time, madame . . . I must *live*—it is a situation of strangeness—in order that I may *die*, not in sin, but as a Christian and a believer!

When Hannah had read to the end, she sat for a long time in silence. Then gathering up the papers she rose suddenly and went, with the packet, to a table at the end of the room. She seated herself there and opening a drawer took out a small cheque-book. With the recognition, as absolute as it was unexpected, of the truth in every line of the strange story she had followed, had come a necessity for immediate action. Her course lay straight before her. Her mind was made up. She would give this woman the pitifully meager sum of money that she asked for. Was not its carefully considered smallness an added proof of honesty? Despite herself Hannah felt a sort of compassion for Amélie, and, what is more, she trusted her. She knew instinctively, keen woman of affairs though she was, that the giving of this money meant the end of the whole matter. So she opened the book and filled out a cheque, drawing it to her own order. She entered the amount, the name and the date on the stub, in her clear, deliberate handwriting. With this act the affair seemed closed, for the rest was simple. She would drive to the bank herself the next morning, cash the cheque and leave the money for Madame Beauvois at the inn. *And Jules Le Fevre need never know!* The thought, as it rose before her, brought a fierce sense of satisfaction that his happiness lay entirely in her control. Hannah allowed herself no illusions. She pictured the situation if the disclosure had been made to Jules instead

of to herself. She saw his excitement, his anger, his passion, his dismay, his sorrow, his gloom: the long gamut of his emotions, even his tears! And after every conceivable scene the result would have been quite the same; for, at the end, he would have brought the matter to her for decision. It was well, indeed, that Amélie had come to her in the beginning. Amélie, too, understood Jules Le Fevre, and a certain resentment of this fact stirred at Hannah's heart. Yes; it is the plain duty of the strong—be they men or women—to protect the weak. Some persons are made for one thing and some for another. It was in the nature of Jules Le Fevre to be happy. She wanted his happiness of youth, his gaiety, to remain untouched. Indeed, *he must never know!* In a year it would all be over—in a year—or less! She must hold, for just that time, the horrible knowledge that she was not, and had never been, the wife of Jules Le Fevre! It was a strange, unheard-of fate for her—Hannah Hoadley—to live with a man who was not her husband. It was uncanny, grotesque. Such a thing ought to have happened to quite a different sort of person! Well, that was past and gone. It could not be helped. No one need ever know. She was perfectly able to keep the secret and be happy just as long as Jules was happy. To do as she intended to do was both her duty and her right. Save Jules Le Fevre from the knowledge and the pain she must—and would—at any cost!

She walked across the room and stood at a window for a moment. The moonlight, as it fell through the parted curtains full on her face, showed there strange lines of obstinacy.

Suddenly Hannah stepped back at a sound of wheels on the gravel. A carriage turned to the driveway from the road. It came into sight an instant later and stopped in front of the door. Hannah leaned forward and saw, to her surprise, Jules Le Fevre spring out. He took his bag from the driver's hand. "Oh, that's all right," she heard him say; "keep the change to drink my

health. I'll send for the rest of the things tomorrow. Good night!" His words and laugh were gay. This was just what she might have expected. She understood it all quite clearly. Her husband, unable to bear any longer the consciousness that he had annoyed her that afternoon, had thrown over the whole expedition and was coming back to "make up"! How ridiculous of Jules! In a *boy* it might have been amusing—but in a *man*! . . . She followed his quick step across the hall and over the stairs. He knocked softly at her door and tried the handle. Some unwonted instinct held Hannah motionless. She could imagine just what he would do if she let him in: his penitence, his pleadings. She would give him his share of discomfort. She felt an impulse to repay herself, somewhat, for the great service that she was about to render him, by making his small abasement as difficult as possible.

He knocked again, more loudly. Then he spoke:

"Hannah, are you asleep? Let me in, please. Why have you shut me out?"

Listening, she realized that this was the first time that her door had ever been locked against him.

Still she was silent.

"Let me in, I say." Jules struck the door sharply. "It is I, Jules. I've something to tell you."

Hannah smiled. Yes; he had something to tell her, no doubt . . . his poor, foolish apology. What if she were to tell him what *she* knew?

"Hannah, open the door, I say!" He shook the handle violently. Still she did not answer. "You have no business to keep me out. I give you warning. Let me in! Do you remember *what I told you this afternoon?*"

She caught her breath at the touch of a tone that she had heard Jules use but once before! Only a few hours ago. She recognized it as the tone of definite command, and within her stirred strongly an unbelievable impulse of obedience. She thrust it back, yet stood waiting, had she but known, for

the new, strange note to call it forth again.

Then the door shook in a mighty grasp. Jules's voice that came from behind it was stern with anger.

"Hannah!" he said, "I know you are there. If you don't open this door, I'll break it down. I have the right to come in."

Again the unaccountable impulse beat at Hannah's heart. She started forward. Jules was demanding a right! What had come over him? Was it possible that he *knew*? Could he have seen Amélie? Her mind swam through conjectures. If he did *not* know there was yet time. Instinctively she turned toward her desk with its open drawers. She would hide the cheque and papers there. For a moment of irresolution her hand lay upon them. Then suddenly some medium that must have hung always between her and reality, obscuring her mental vision like a fog, seemed to melt away; and in the clearer light, with a flash of comprehension as sharp as pain, she saw what she had done. She had taken something that was not hers! She had deliberately stolen a *right* from another. She had interposed her own selfish, misguided will between her husband and the responsibilities that belonged to him. She realized remorsefully that she had done this always in the lesser issues of life, and now *almost* in a vital one! Thank heaven, it *was* almost! . . . As if freed from bonds, she rushed to the door; but on that instant it gave way at the pressure of a shoulder and Jules stood before her. In his blue eyes blazed a light before which her own eyes faltered. His voice was stern with displeasure.

"What does this mean?" he began. But Hannah had flung herself on his breast.

"Don't speak to me! Don't speak until I have told you something!" she cried. "You may know it or you may not, but I must free my mind. It was all a mistake about Amélie's death. She is *alive*! She has been here this evening! She wanted money because she is ill, and I made out a cheque so that

she would go away and not trouble us again. I meant that you should never know this, Jules. I meant to keep it from you; but now I see that I have been wrong, quite wrong . . . in every way. I have not been fair to you, Jules. I have interfered in what did not belong to me. I wanted to help you when it was really *your* place to help *me*! Can you forgive me? . . . See, the papers are on my desk . . . the papers that Amélie left. Go and read them, for they will tell you everything. Then you will know what to do."

She looked up quickly as she felt his body draw away from her. His face had grown pale and in the troubled gaze that seemed to pass beyond her she read surprise and dismay.

"Amélie alive . . . and *here!*" he cried. "You have seen her—*here!*" This is terrible, terrible!" Then, as if

impelled by a thought even more poignant he stopped short, and seizing Hannah's hands, looked deep into her eyes. "And you meant to keep a thing like this from me! You meant *to buy Amélie* off?" He spoke sternly. "You don't know what it would have been, if you had not told me. But, thank God, thank God, you *did* tell me!"

He sighed as he left her and went quickly to the desk; but before he sat down he looked back and smiled tenderly.

"Poor child, poor child," he said.

Hannah ran toward him.

"Not yet," he shook his head and put out a restraining hand. The papers lay spread before him. "Wait until I have gone through these alone! Sit there, by the window, and, when I have decided what must be done, we will talk over the matter together!"



AWAKENING

By Joseph I. C. Clarke

IT were joy to have lived, if only to know
I had waked in this dusk of the woods to the flow
Of a streamlet that leaps down its dell to the lea,
Its waters a-sparkle and beckoning to me:

To have waked in the forest and marveled to hear
A bird at its matin-song gladsome and clear:
"From dawn-blue to sun-glow I've haunted your dream
With the lure of Her love by the marge of the stream."

To have slept in my sorrow and wakened but now
With a kiss as of exquisite lips on my brow,
And Her call as of bells to a world that's reborn,
And a beat in my blood like the laughter of morn:

To have wandered and toiled in the deep forest aisles,
To have counted in darkness the wearisome miles,
To have slept for the dream's sake, and waked with Love's word
At the lips of the stream, at the heart of the bird.

LETTERS TO A CREDITOR

(SUGGESTED AS MODELS FOR USE IN A PANIC)

By Arthur Judd Ryan

I

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

Your communication regarding the small amount I owe you for groceries has been duly received. I regret having overlooked the matter and trust my delay has caused you no inconvenience. It is not entirely convenient for me to send cheque tonight, but I will see that you have one by the latter part of next week.

Yours truly,
JOHN J. JONES.

II

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

I am informed that you 'phoned me today while I was absent. I suppose you are wondering why I did not send cheque as promised, especially as I have never before been guilty of such a breach of faith. The financial condition seems unusual. It reminds me of nothing so much as the year 1903. There seems to be a great scarcity of cash in the city, and, as a consequence, those of us who are not salaried men are slightly embarrassed (which must seem strange to you, knowing as you probably do my extensive holdings). I have several transactions in the mill which ought to bring me in a considerable amount of cash during the next

ten days, and you will receive a cheque by the end of that period.

Trusting that this will be satisfactory,

Yours very truly,
JOHN J. JONES.

III

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

Your letter received. I realize that you are probably pressed for cash and that collections must be difficult in these strenuous financial times. I have never seen anything like it before. I never believed that I could be bothered by such a trifling amount as I owe you, but of what use are possessions in these times, if they can't be turned into cash? One hundred dollars looks as big today as a thousand would ordinarily. You have been extremely courteous, and I would like to help you in any way I could. I am consequently enclosing my note for \$231.76, in full of all accounts to date, payable in thirty days. You can, no doubt, readily get this discounted and so obtain immediate cash, and by thirty days' time I will have enough money to pay off every debt I have in the world.

Trusting that you will be able to make use of the note,

Very truly yours,
JOHN J. JONES.

P. S.—Kindly fill in the name of the bank at which you wish it made pay-

able, and notify me. I would make it payable at my bank, but it closed last week.

J. J. J.

IV

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

Kindly tell your collector—an impertinent sort of fellow—to stop coming here and annoying Mrs. Jones, when I am not at home. You hold my note—as good as gold—maturing in about two weeks' time, and I see no reason why we should be troubled. Evidently the collector has not been informed that you hold the note.

Yours,

JOHN J. JONES.

V

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

I am not going to be able to pay my note when it matures February 2. You will be astounded, I know, as I am myself. Never has such a thing happened before. To think that a note of mine could be protested—it is horrible! But what can I do? Transactions of magnitude—that should have brought me in many thousands of dollars—have fallen through at the last moment—all because of the tremendous paucity of cash. If we had a different President of the United States, none of us would have any of these troubles. But what's the use? I am making arrangements to sell some of my bonds. I hate to part with them, but it is better than this fearful humiliation of unpaid bills. As they are not listed bonds, I shall have to sell to an individual who wants them, and he tells me that it will take him a week to procure the purchase money. At the end of that time you will be paid in full. If the bond deal should,

by any chance, fall through (practically an impossibility), I will draw on a reserve fund which I always keep in a savings bank, so you will be paid positively at that time. If you could save my note from protest I should always appreciate the favor, but do just as you think best.

Yours,

JOHN J. JONES.

VI

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

The bond sale fell through (the purchaser being unable to obtain the purchase price) and when I went to the savings bank to draw my funds and pay you off, what do you think happened? They demanded ninety days' notice before disbursing a cent! Now, what is a man to do? You have the choice of two courses. You may either return the old note of mine which you hold and accept the enclosed new note, for the same amount with interest added, to run thirty days—or else you may sue. No one could be more considerate than you have been. I shall always remember the firm of Grumwald & Humms. But there is such a thing as imposing on good-nature. But—oh, the disgrace of a suit at law! Some men would not mind, perhaps, but nothing could be more shameful, more horrible to

Yours,

JOHN J. JONES.

VII

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,
— BROADWAY,
NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

No, I cannot even pay you tonight the ninety and some odd dollars which I now owe you, exclusive of the amount covered by my note, maturing in the course of the next ten days. I consider

your suggestion that I purchase no more groceries from you until our old accounts are settled excellent. It is your right to demand it. To be sure, it is possible that a little different attitude on your part might have revealed a trifle more of "the milk of human kindness," but that is for you to judge. In the chaotic condition of the times even the best of men must suffer.

Yours truly,

JOHN J. JONES.

P. S.—Thank you for the return of the old note.

VIII

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,

— BROADWAY,

NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

I am sick in bed. A cousin died last week, and I was too ill to attend the funeral. It is with great difficulty that I write this letter. Of course, under the circumstances, I have not been able to obtain money for your note, maturing tomorrow. But I shall ask no further extension. You have been exceedingly kind in your unfortunate relations with me. Bring suit at once, and force this disagreeable business to a conclusion.

Yours as ever,

JOHN J. JONES.

IX

MESSRS. JACKSON & SHARPE,

— NASSAU ST.,

NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

Your letter duly received. No one

could have been more inconsiderate than your clients in putting their insignificant account in the hands of attorneys. Tonight is Saturday night. You will receive cheque in full by next Wednesday morning. This is certain. You will oblige me by delaying service of a summons until that date.

Yours truly,

JOHN J. JONES.

X

CARLTON HOTEL, LONDON.

MESSRS. GRUMWALD & HUMMS,

— BROADWAY,

NEW YORK.

DEAR SIRs:

I am here in England trying to recuperate. I shall watch conditions in the United States, both from this country and the Continent, with great interest. When they have improved, Mrs. Jones and I will return to New York—probably some time after election. The tariff should be revised and the Let Us Alone propaganda be diligently circulated. In that way our great nation will eventually be restored to its former state of happiness and prosperity. I regret that I left no property in the State of New York which your attorney could attach, as I should like to see you get your money. But my belongings all fluttered away during the panic. When I return your account shall be settled—in full.

Trusting that the next twelve months will be the most successful of your successful career, believe me,

Ever cordially yours,

JOHN J. JONES.



THE PERVERSE MAXIMS OF CUPID OUT O' WORK

TO know all is to seek the divorce court.

To forget is to forgive.

Be sure you're on with the new love before you're off with the old.

Hope confirmed maketh the heart sick.

You rarely insult a woman by jealousy; you frequently inconvenience her.

It is easier to love a woman in spite of her faults than because of her virtues.

ALICE VAN LEEB CARRICK.

PARTICULAR PARMALEE

By Mrs. Luther Harris

“PARTICULAR PARMALEE” some wag with a gift for euphonious alliteration had dubbed him, and the sobriquet was so apropos it had clung like a burr. Boston in its most intense exclusiveness had never produced anything more absolutely *au fait* than “Particular Parmalee.”

He was of the Elect. He breathed only the high and rarefied atmosphere of the esthetic and the ethical. For generations the Parmalee blood had rivaled lapis lazuli in hue. He talked a great deal (in the accent of Beacon street) about “the potency of the Ideal.” His platitudes were all so carefully measured and polished you felt sure he must first have modeled them in clay.

Most assuredly he was a “Bromide,” and you would not by any chance have classed him among the “Sulphites.” He recognized the division of mankind into three classes; society, persons and the masses. Would-be dandies aped his mannerisms, his dress, his cravats; he was the *arbiter elegantiarum* of fashion, and to hear his name announced at a social function was to hear that flattering hum which heralds the arrival of the Already Arrived.

He was a well-set-up, rather noticeable man with a very distinguished nose, a high forehead, and the mere embryo of a bald spot which was beginning to spread, like the plague-spot of Egypt, right where his thinning hair divided for a wide part.

His caste was as indelibly stamped upon him as the value of a coin is stamped upon its face.

Thickly and impenetrably encased in New England reserve, he was markedly

of the Brahmin caste, which is more coldly discriminating and judicial than passionate or emotional.

He had never been guilty of anything bordering upon a flirtation—flirtations were vulgar. To be sure his distinguished attentions had occasionally been centred upon some especially favored member of the unquiet sex, but never to the extent of permitting them to be defined as attentions with intentions. He prided himself upon having successfully side-stepped all feminine beguilements, beguile she never so wisely. If he encountered too warm a glow from amorous eyes it alarmed his prudence and set him on the defensive even more than it gratified that inborn vanity which is truly man’s.

So far he had found no difficulty in following the rules of the Pater Patriæ: “Friendly relations with all; entangling alliances with none.” Pondering upon that ancient saw that “a man has but two happy days with a woman, the day he marries her and the day he buries her,” Parmalee had always found his mind dwelling upon the long interim between.

If he had taken some “bud” (Parmalee was quite partial to *débutantes*) to a symphony concert twice, and once to the Art Museum, and had sent her an édition de luxe of “Morte d’Arthur” or “The Ring and the Book,” he felt that he must go no further.

When any hesitancy was felt as to absolutely correct usage or the proper thing to do on a given occasion, it had become a humorous aphorism to say: “When in doubt, watch Parmalee.”

“Bad form” was the most damning of criticisms when it fell from his lips, almost like the issuing of a papal bull.

"Rum lot," while a truly British form of condemnation at any time, took on a darker tinge of meaning when Parmalee gave it forth. No one better than Parmalee knew the difference between the people and mere "folks."

Reserve and dignity marked his mien, and although he was only thirty-five one would have fancied him much more heavily weighted with years, by reason of this appalling dignity; and almost wondered if he had not, by some special arrangement with the Creator, been born thirty-five and wearing a monocle.

Lost upon him was much of the pathos and the humor of the great Tragedy of the Commonplace in this seething democracy of ours, whose stage is a continent. He troubled himself very little over the Problem of the Many, and had a kid-glove antipathy, just on general principles, to an unscrupulous trust-promoter, legislature-buyer or watered-stock-inflator, merely a supercilious distaste for anything so bourgeois.

Lounging in his club one morning with a newspaper before him, he was astonished to discover that he could remember nothing of what he had read. Things suddenly looked blurred and dim.

"Sight doesn't register on the brain," said the Eminent Specialist to whom he had at once hastened. And the Man of Wisdom eyed him with a glance which seemed to penetrate to the very last vertebra of his spinal column. "Too little exercise, too high living. You've had an overdose of the 'truffles and tokay of life,' Parmalee. Get out into the backwoods some place, sleep out of doors; get a tent. Live as a sane human being *ought* to live—we're further from knowing how to live every century since Adam delved! You're a glittering product of our so-called modern civilization, and what you need is to get down close to Mother Earth, close enough to hear her breathe—close enough to hear her heart beat. Walk; walk till you can't move another peg! Forswear cocktails and tobacco and bridge; and live as near like an Indian

as it's possible for a Boston-bred man to live; and leave all your fixings of civilization behind."

A Chicago man, whom he met by chance at the club, was the unconscious director of Parmalee's destiny. "Why don't you go up to Pott's Crossing?" he suggested; "it's a little out-of-the-world place in the Maine woods. Not fashionable, you know, hasn't been 'discovered' yet. Quiet? Well, I should say! So quiet you can hear your hair grow. Piney woods all around, smells like the spice-box used to when I climbed up on the pantry shelf after cookies. Good old-fashioned inn there, too, the real thing. And cream! Say, you can get cream there that tastes as if it had really been distilled from clover blossoms—through the medium of a live cow. Sweet breath of kine, dew on the grass, buttercups and daisies, everything pastoral, bucolic; makes a fellow forget the asphalt when he's walked on sweet-smelling pine-needles for about a week, and hasn't seen a 'keep off the grass' sign or jumped out of the way of an automobile. And say, talk about nectar of the gods! and ambrosia! and all that sort of thing—you can get buttermilk there that's got 'em all skun a mile!"

Parmalee was giving scant attention, but the Chicago man was now launched on the sea of his own eloquence: "You walk down a long lane from the inn, a real old country lane like you read of in English novels, and you almost expect to meet a rosy-cheeked milkmaid in a sun-bonnet, with a three-legged stool under her arm—Phyllis of the Flocks, you know. But you don't. Most likely you meet a cow. When you get to the end of this lane there's a farm-house, looks like The Old Homestead—you know, the kind the multi-millionaires are always sighing to go back to, where they used to warm their bare feet frosty mornings on the place where the cows lay down over night.

"The yard's full of lilac-bushes and snow-balls and larkspur—and there's a bed of fresh green mint that just naturally shrieks *julep* at you.

"Did you ever see a spring-house? Neither did I till I saw old lady Bunting's. I don't see why some of the ingenious playwrights don't work in a spring-house, and give the poor, over-worked pergola a rest. Down at the foot of that lane there's a big grove of poplars and balm-o'-Gilead trees, and the spring-house is tucked away in there like some beautiful secret. It's latticed and vine-covered and has seats all around. There ought to be a Phyllis there, for the *mise en scène* calls for it, and dramatic sequence demands it, but there isn't. There's just nice, fat, comfortable Mrs. Bunting. Lucky it's so alliterative, isn't it? 'Mrs. Buttermilk Bunting.' She has a smile that's like a May-day breaking, and waddles when she walks; and she always wears nice clean calico dresses in some large pattern of palm-leaves, or bunches of some hitherto unclassified tropical fruit.

"In that cold, clear spring that trickles there the buttermilk cans are sunk; and you simply drink and *drink* till you feel like the frog in the fable. Then you go back and drink some more."

"I don't care for buttermilk," said Parmalee coldly, his hand unconsciously compressing the bulb of his distinguished nose.

"That's because you never drank it—you never *tasted* real buttermilk. You just wait! You'll be filling up on old lady Bunting's buttermilk like a high-roller on booze at an Elks' banquet. Makes a fellow feel as gay as a young filly in a fresh pasture. Good for that tired feeling, too. Did you ever watch a rooster when he finds a nice big fat worm and calls all the hens in the farm-yard to come and share it? It's a trait of human nature, too, when a man discovers something exceptionally good—and that's the way I feel about that buttermilk."

Parmalee followed the Eminent Specialist's advice only in part. He used what he considered proper discretion in the matter. No, he would not sleep in a tent, there were sure to be earwigs and ants and—things. His luggage was largely made up of what the Man of Wisdom would have character-

ized as "useless fixings of civilization." Likewise he took with him the invaluable Titcomb, who had been in his service six years. Parmalee would as soon have thought of leaving any portion of his anatomy at home as of leaving Titcomb.

"You will have to go on ahead a day, Titcomb," he explained one morning, looking up through shaving-lather like Venus emerging from sea-foam, "and secure quarters at the bally inn. Probably a rum place, but do the best you can; get a whole floor if it's to be had. Tell them I can't be disturbed by dogs, or chickens, or children. There are sure to be roosters crowing at the most unreasonable hours in the morning—why is it they always crow at that ungodly time o' day, Titcomb?"

"I don't know, sir. Most like it's only 'abit," volunteered that functionary.

"Well, I can't have it, you know, Titcomb. I'm going there for rest—and because my brain don't register. And a man can't rest with a lot of inconsiderate roosters around, that get up just as he's turning in. And guinea-fowls. There always *are* guinea-fowls in the country, Titcomb. Why is it?"

"I don't know, sir," volunteered the invaluable; "I've an idee they wouldn't find it 'ealthy in town, sir."

"And they won't find it healthy about that inn, either, Titcomb. Buy 'em all up, if they've got any, and we'll have guinea-fowl pâté with mushrooms. And by the way, Titcomb, stow away a few bottles of Sauterne and some Bar-le-duc—a man can't expect his brain to register if he's got to live on pickled pork and succotash and corn-bread. Stipulate about towels, Titcomb, and warm shaving-water, and my vapor bath; and don't fail to arrange with them about the roosters.

"If there are any sheep, Titcomb, see that they are fenced off and are not allowed to baa under the windows. Why is it they always baa at such ungodly hours, Titcomb?"

"I don't know, sir," answered that invaluable functionary, aloud. But being a much cleverer fellow than he was

ever given credit for or than he ever permitted himself to appear, he added mentally: "Most like it's because their brains don't register."

When Parmalee stepped off the train at the nearest railway station, five miles from Pott's Centre, the invaluable Titcomb awaited him, looking absurdly incongruous in that landscape, where the woods came down to meet the little town from all sides.

"This was the best I could do, sir," he apologized as Parmalee climbed into a buckboard, evidently ancient of days; "the carry-all as belongs to the inn, sir, 'as been took by a picnic party. I 'ad to 'ire this from a lady as lives at the end of the lane. There's a few milk-cans to be loaded in behind, sir, if you don't mind their being mixed up with your luggage." And during the entire drive, through a wood fragrant with spring blossoms and where the road wound among trees stately as Saul, they were accompanied by a fusillade of jangling milk-cans.

"They belong to the lady as lives down the lane," explained Titcomb, unconsciously paraphrasing Mother Goose. "She 'as quite a reputation, sir, on buttermilk; and twict a week she sends some up to the Donnybrook club, sir. These was the empty cans as came back on the train. It's a very 'igh-toned club, sir, its members bein' New York haristocrats as come 'ere for the fishing. But it's ten miles from the inn, sir, and they only come over occasional for the buttermilk. I 'ave bought all the guinea-hens; I am 'appy to say there was only six, but they do come uncommon 'igh, sir."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Palmtree," said the smiling landlady who met Parmalee at the top of the veranda steps. "I guess your valet has got everything all fixed in your rooms. All day yestedy he was a-layin' out things in sets, though I allow Luella mixed 'em up considerable when she was up there a-red-din' up this morning. Come right in, Mr. Palmtree; most of my folks have gone picnickin' today over to Pine Ridge."

He followed this stout person upstairs, through a long narrow hall,

and she threw open the door of his big, airy room with a sweep of her hand, as if she were ushering in royalty.

"I decorated the room up considerable, after I heard you was coming, Mr. Palmtree. This plaster-Paris dog," she placed her large hand lovingly on a gray plaster dog with staring eyes, on the mantel—"by rights belongs downstairs in the parlor, but I put it here thinkin' most likely you was fond of statuary, and it would make you feel kind of more at home like. I've always heard that Boston runs awful strong to statuary. That hair wreath was wove by my sister Ellen out of the entire family's hair. The red's from the Clarke side—all the Clarks was sandy complected. This here air-castle," she pointed proudly to an intricate arrangement in small pieces of cardboard put together with scarlet wool, "was give the first premium at the county fair and contains three hundred and sixty-two pieces by actual count. I guess your valet has got that bathing-tub thing fixed up in the other room. He held out that you wouldn't stand for it when I tried to get him to put it in the suller. Of course there's them that has their own idees about things, but as for *me* I have always stood in one bowl and washed out of the other all my life, and I ain't ever see that the arrangement needed any improvin' on."

"Good gad, Titcomb," fumed Parmalee, when she had finally talked herself out of the room and down the hall, and Titcomb had brought up the luggage and softly closed the door—"Good gad, it's a chamber of horrors! Why did you let her bring up all this junk? It gets on a man's nerves, you know, Titcomb."

"I couldn't 'elp it, sir. She was that set on a-making of you feel at 'ome, sir. It was only by 'alf a chance I kept her from bringing up the melodeon. She said you might want to play 'ims, sir."

"Good Lord! and these chromos, Titcomb. I doubt if I can sleep in the same room with them. Why is it, Titcomb, that there's always sure to be a picture of Washington crossing the

Delaware in a place like this? Why is it?"

Titcomb, who was leaning over a portmanteau copiously besprinkled with foreign labels, holding in one hand a bath-sponge the size of a football, and in the other a pair of dreamy blue pajamas, answered absent-mindedly:

"I don't know, sir. Most like it's only 'abit, sir."

Two hours later, Parmalee, having tubbed under great difficulties, appeared upon the veranda, a flawless and speckless triumph of haberdashery and tonsorial art. A black-browed, rather handsome but sulky-looking girl rose from the hammock lazily and gave him her hand. "I'm Clare Howe," she said in a drawling voice with a deep contralto note in it. "Most of Ma Pierson's 'folks,' as she designates her boarders, are picnicking. I loathe anything in the way of a pleasure excursion, myself, and picnics are my special abomination. Flies, bugs, ticks—all the plagues of Egypt devouring various portions of your outer cuticle while you're *pretending* to have a good time. I lose all the religion that I ever had, and I feel that my immortal soul is of too much value to endanger it for the mere pastime of going forth into the forest primeval to pluck flowerets and eat sandwiches and pickles that are *always* gritty. They will be coming home pretty soon now, cross as bears. You'll see! and half of them not speaking to the other half. It's *always* like that at a picnic. They start off in the morning like St. Patrick's day in an Irish village. And they come home in the evening as grouchy as a political aspirant who feels that he has only got half of the votes he paid for. Oh, you can't tell *me!*"

She settled back in the hammock and lolled comfortably. "This place," with a comprehensive wave of her clever-looking hand, "is just about as exciting as a Quaker meeting or a game of tiddle-dy-winks."

"Who is the—er, person in the abbreviated overalls mowing in the field over there?" inquired Parmalee, with languid interest.

"That?" inquired the girl, straight-

ening up and pushing the hair back from her sulky face. "Why, that's Ma Pierson's husband. Just that. He is (so I gather from Ma Pierson's conversation) always 'signing' for impecunious friends who are sure they can pay long before the notes are due. They don't, and Pa Pierson has to. Whenever he starts to town for the mail she is sure to call after him: 'Now, pa, don't you go and let nobody mollycoddle you into signin' for 'em.' And her first question on his return always is: 'Now, pa, you ain't went and done it, have you? You ain't went and signed for somebody, have you?'"

"There isn't anything to do around here," she explained further, "except inhale ozone or walk down the lane and drink buttermilk. Are you fond of buttermilk, Mr. Parmalee?" she demanded, as if on his answer hung his fate.

"I particularly dislike it," announced Parmalee, politely smothering a yawn that made his ears ring.

"Then I see you're in for ozone—straight," with a note of finality.

It was growing dusk now, and off over the pine tops a full moon sailed slowly into view, big and golden.

"Here they are *now*," announced the girl, as a carry-all with two heavy-looking farm horses rounded a bend in the road, and there was a flutter of waving handkerchiefs and a prolonged toot on a fish-horn.

"They are doing that to keep their spirits up. Oh, they can't fool *me!* they are every one hating each other like Cain and Abel! I know, I've been to 'em. The large woman in the gray dust-coat is the Parent of the Paragon. The Paragon is the pale girl with white eyelashes sitting next her on the back seat. A comfortable consciousness of living in Boston radiates from the Parent of the Paragon like light from a star. She may be said to carry her atmosphere with her—like the planets. She oozes culture and transcendentalism from every pore, and can quote Emerson in her sleep.

"The gentleman with the goatee and military torso is Colonel Root. His

constitution has been undermined by a continual diet of epigrams. The girl next to him, with eye-glasses on and her hair parted in the middle, is Miss Finch. She is down here for rest after too strenuous labor among the Great Unwashed—been doing slum work, you know. As for me, I have passed safely through the Social Settlement stage and have got back to embroidered underwear."

She rested her chin on the veranda rail and went on in her drawling voice: "That young Hercules-looking boy in the Panama and blue shirt, with his trousers rolled up—(it's raining in London, you know)—is young Tom Oglevie. He 'flunked' in his second year at Harvard, and is being tutored for make-up exams in September. Didn't stand well enough in Greek and mathematics to squeeze through the finals. He is a probationary sophomore and a fine young animal. I believe he distinguished himself in the preparatory schools chiefly by 'running 'round ends,' whatever that is. I judge from his conversation that running 'round ends is a most important feature of the curriculum.

"His tutor betook himself to the solitude of the pine woods early this morning, to 'loaf and invite his soul,' so he said—but I've a shrewd suspicion he is writing The Great American Novel—(that's what it is always *going* to be, while they are writing it, you know). He is a very quiet young man; in fact he says so little that one naturally infers he must have a great deal to say. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to establish an owl-like reputation like that, Mr. Parmalee? Just to look wise and say nothing?"

If any latent sarcasm lingered around this speech it was lost upon Parmalee, and she went on:

"I feel sorry for the tutor, trying to beat the classics into the head of a young barbarian so obviously designed by the Creator merely to ornament the football field. The tutor, Truesdale Blish, has a fine head—just like a young bull in one of Rosa Bonheur's pictures of Highland cattle."

The carry-all had now drawn up with great effect in front of the barn-yard gate, and the party were clambering down with evident hilarity.

"Oh, they can't fool *me*," said the girl, with a wise shake of her black head, running her fingers through her hair, "by any sound of revelry by night. They're ready to snap each others' heads off! Trust a picnic for bringing out the Old Adam in the most angelic human creature! Of course they will come in and say what a perfectly lovely—simply *glorious*—time they have had! I have no doubt Ananias and Sapphira *began* at a picnic. That Miss Finch will keep up the amiable pose till the last breath, because she is on the still-hunt after Colonel Root. Funny how a man always *thinks* he is the pursuer instead of the pursued, isn't it? Thinks he has found a little shrinking violet, and all the time the little shrinking violet has had him spotted for months—and he was doomed from the first minute she got her eyes on him. Just as long as Colonel Root is about, that Miss Finch will sit on the veranda in the moonlight with her head on her hand, looking sweet and pensive, like a straight-front Blessed Damozel—but she has been to a *picnic*, and I'll bet that before she goes to bed tonight she will leave the prints of those little teeth of hers in the bed-post."

II

A GIRL in a corduroy skirt and tan shirtwaist, with a great mass of coppery red hair blowing about her temples, hesitated, with her hands on the top rail of the fence.

"Do I dare? I wonder if I *could*?" she meditated. "It's a long time since I have; but there's no one in sight, so here goes." And she began climbing the fence, with evident glee at the adventure.

Having reached the top rail safely she balanced herself gracefully and prepared to descend. But alas for that pride which ever goes before a fall! The top rail, with the perversity known

only to the top rail of a snake fence, gave a slippery roll, and the girl slid to the ground with the hem of her corduroy skirt neatly caught over a protruding knot in that fatal top rail. She laughed softly and began a violent series of gymnastic efforts to free herself. All of these having failed, she attempted the acrobatic feat of climbing up backward. With no success. She laughed again and tried reaching the top rail by a Delsartean series of poses which brought her fine shoulders into play and a glow of bright color to her face and neck.

"Why don't the old gathers give way?" she bemoaned, with a laugh that had the edge of a sob in it, pulling vigorously at the stout fabric. "Mercy! what if the Fairy Prince should come now, and me suspended between heaven and earth like Mohammed's coffin or Somebody-or-other's sword. There! thank goodness, the hem's ripping, anyway!"

"Pardon me," said a voice behind her a little breathlessly, for a man who never steps out of a dignified walk and has just sprinted across a field like a crack halfback in a 'Varsity eleven naturally comes up a little breathless—"Pardon me, but can I be of any assistance?" Parmalee said it in exactly the manner and with the voice he would have used had he asked: "Pardon me, but may I see your dance program?"

"If you'll just unhook me from this rail," she laughed over her shoulder, "and save me from the death of an inverted Absalom. Oh, thank you so much." And she shook down the corduroy skirt over a little pair of russet shoes built on a man's last, stout and comfortable, with extension soles like the verandas around a summer hotel.

She was bareheaded, and a mass of burnished copper with red lights in it had half fallen about her shoulders. She began twisting this up and looked from under the loose strands of it with big, reddish-brown eyes that had little gold flecks in, like the flecks that dance so alluringly in *eau de vie de Dantzig*.

"I'll never try it again," she laughed; "it was the *meanest* fence, anyway.

That top rail did it on purpose." Her voice had a remarkable quality that arrested attention. Parmalee was inordinately critical of women's voices. Most women's voices were as unpleasant as that of the six guinea-fowls which Ma Pierson was now making into a paste.

"Evidently you have never served an apprenticeship at climbing fences," ventured Parmalee, marveling at the length of her lashes.

"I *should* have, being a country girl. Oh, have you a pin, please?" Something about the russet brown of her dress and the red lights of her hair brought to his mind a nasturtium blossom.

"My name is Parmalee," said "Particular," with his most stilted manner, producing a neat "housewife" filled with correct rows of needles and pins, which he always carried in some one of the numerous pockets which make of a man's habiliments a joy forever. "Ralph Waldo Parmalee. I am staying at the inn."

She glanced up sideways from her process of pinning. "Oh! Then you'll probably be joining the Buttermilk Brigade." She gave that soft-as-a-lute laugh again, with a pin in her mouth, and Parmalee endured nervous terrors lest she swallow it. "That which refreshes," she took out the pin and Parmalee breathed freer, "and does not inebriate. Which in the end biteth not like a serpent nor stingeth like an adder, but which maketh the adipose tissue to gather on them who desire it not. If you drink *enough* of it," she dimpled, giving him the full sweep of her lashes, "it prevents wrinkles, makes the hair curl and keeps your hat on straight. What a cunning little 'housewife'!" She handed it back with a twinkle of amusement. "Thank you so much for the pins. One pin in time saves nine, just as one stitch in nine saves time." The golden flecks in her singular eyes danced again. "And thank you again for saving me from the awful fate of hanging there for hours with my poor brains all running to my head. My name's Bettina Lee and I'm staying

with Aunt Serena at the foot of the lane. It sounds like 'I come from Table Mountain and my name is Truthful James,' doesn't it? I'm taking the short-cut across the field because I like to walk through the meadow-grass, and I simply *love* that smell of crushed sweet-fern and clover."

She looked up at him with a certain alluring glance, not pronounced enough to be called coquetry and with no suggestion of boldness, yet which invited by its very sweetness and absence of artificiality. But Parmalee, the correct, whose creed was the iron-bound creed of *les convenances*, a stickler for the extreme proprieties, bowed stiffly and lifted his hat with a certain austere air of finality very chilling.

She nodded and smiled again, then walked rapidly away through the long, lush meadow-grass, the sunlight playing mad tricks with her hair.

On his way back Parmalee met young Oglevie, looking warm and excited.

"Say," announced that youth, his hands deep in his trousers pockets—"I'm chasing a Vision. It had red hair. Gee whiz! I never *saw* such hair! I had just started in pursuit half-an-hour ago when Blish called me back, confound him, to bone on Greek. And now it's gone. Just my blamed luck! Lord, I'm *all in*! Eyes like the sea, or the Bay of Naples. It was so unlooked-for, a Vision like that in these wilds, I was knocked so silly I feel like one of those animals that go staggering about after having their brains removed for purposes of scientific investigation. Where in thunder do you suppose she dropped from?"

"From the region of the gods, I should fancy, according to your description," said Parmalee, smiting dandelions with his stick and looking vague and noncommittal. "No, I have seen no 'Vision.'"

"But where has she disappeared to—that's what I want to know. And I'll find out, by jingo, if it takes from now till the crack o' doom."

He swung off in a stride like a young Achilles, and presently broke into a

catch of song which came back over the fields in a high, sweet, boyish tenor:

"All I want is fifty million dollars,
A champagne fountain sprinkling at my feet,
J. Pierpont Morgan waiting on the table,
And Sousa's band a-playing while I eat."

Later, when Parmalee had taken his siesta, had changed his trousers for the third time that day and was yawning on the veranda, young Oglevie bounded up the steps, three at a time.

"Say, Parmalee, do you like buttermilk?" he demanded.

"It is a plebeian drink for which I have never cultivated a taste," drawled Parmalee, readjusting his monocle, which had shot into the depths of his immaculate shirt-bosom owing to the violence of his yawn. "It always tastes of cow, don't you know?"

"Funny why it does," grinned Oglevie. "One thing to be said for it, though—it never calls for the after-math of a soda and seltzer in the cold gray dawn of the morning after. Too bad you don't like it, Parmalee, because that's probably your only chance of making her acquaintance. The Vision, you know. She dispenses buttermilk down at the spring-house, like Hebe ladling out nectar to the gods. It seems she's a little country girl from hereabouts and has come over to 'help Aunt Serena.' She tends to the buttermilk branch of the business. I drank *three* glasses—and say, Parmalee, honestly, I hate the stuff like a dog with the rabies hates water! But with those eyes of hers doing such deadly execution I didn't know whether I was drinking buttermilk or fizz. Say, honestly, Parmalee, she's got Cleo de Merode chased clear up a tree! Why is it that red-headed girls always have a way with them? The auburn-locked kind, you know; the sort that don't freckle. Have you ever noticed how that skin that's like Jersey cream with a dash of port wine in always goes with red hair? It's dollars to doughnuts that Cleopatra's hair was red, historians to the contrary notwithstanding, or she and Antony would never have 'kissed

away kingdoms.' So was Helen of Troy's. So was Aspasia's; I can't think of any more of 'em without referring to 'Famous Women of Antiquity.' And she's got such a deuce of a way with her eyelashes. And a wit that keeps a fellow hopping to keep up. Name's Bettina. In some lights they're green," he added with apparent irrelevance. Then, seeing Parmalee's stare—"her eyes, you know. You'd better fall into line, Parmalee; begin on small doses."

He fell into dreamy reverie, his hand caressing the suggestion of down on his upper lip which to designate as a mustache would be to give to hairy nothings a local habitation and a name.

"I'm going down Lovers' Lane again after supper," he added presently, "and I'll drink another glass of that buttermilk if it's the last act of a mis-spent life."

Several hours later, when the moon had spread cloth-of-gold over the woods and fields, he came up the veranda steps again, but with no buoyant bound in his footfall. He took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair in a dazed way. Then he grinned at Parmalee.

"Say, Parmalee, that's what I call playing it pretty low down on the part of Fate," he announced in a voice as flat as loose violin strings. "It's like hitting below the belt, you know." He dropped wearily into the hammock. "You see, it was like this: I meandered off down the flowery lane, on buttermilk and Bettina bent, and seated myself in the spring-house. The moon rose. All was still save the cooing of a turtle-dove to the young turtles in her nest on the swaying bough of a sapling slim. All nature slept—so evidently did Bettina. Unsatisfied longings surged in my bosom. Were they for buttermilk? Not on your life. But the buttermilk path seemed, for the time being, the only path that led to the virginal heart that beats in the bosom of Bettina. Pardon me if, like Pope, I 'lisp in numbers for the numbers came.' Maybe the numbers came, but Bettina assuredly

did *not*. I was sitting there letting my soul float in dreamy rhapsody when a voice suddenly demanded: 'Be you a-wanting buttermilk?' Now why should I have been lingering near the fount had I not been wanting buttermilk, Parmalee? On the face of it my very presence there was a mute cry for buttermilk. For one mad moment the truth almost sprang to my lips as if just risen from the bottom of that historic well—'No, as heaven hears me, I do *not* desire buttermilk! My soul (not to mention my alimentary canal) revolts at the very thought of it! In fact the entire Department of the Interior is now crying out against that which I have already assimilated.' But no, I dare not speak the words in the face of the fiercest pompadour I ever beheld! She is the maid that milks the bossies. And say, Parmalee, those cows must have good nerves. She might not *stop* an eight-day clock just plumb dead still, but she sure would jar its internal mechanism considerably. We talked about cows. I asked her what particular *brand* of cow they were. She said some were Alderneys and some were Jerseys; and just by way of making conversation I asked her *which were the cows that gave the buttermilk*. I just *had* to drink the stuff, you know; how else could I explain my presence there? Though I managed to spill a good bit of it while she was arranging her pompadour. I made a quick get-away—something about having ten pages of Xenophon to translate, midnight oil dodge, wet towel tied about my head—oh, I made it strong. She 'allowed' that she had heard buttermilk would make brains just like eating fish would. Maybe she didn't realize the irony of it—but she urged me to have *more*."

He gave out a thin cackle of laughter and clasped his hands above his head.

"Good one on me, wasn't it? I feel like the little shaver who thought he was being taken to a picnic, and when he got there found he had only been taken to visit his grandmother's grave. Well, I'm going to turn in. Say, you haven't got any pepsin tablets, have you?"

III

SHE held her little court every day now. And never a Marie Antoinette, playing at dairy farming at Petit Trianon, wielded more graceful sway over her courtiers. Young Oglevie's astonishment was outspoken and his amusement openly manifest when one morning Parmalee strolled into the spring-house and seated himself with dignified deliberation.

"Donnerwetter! Have *you* swallowed the buttermilk bacilli, too, Parmalee?" roared Oglevie, slapping his knee in a burst of laughter. "Thought you drank to her only with thine eyes. Thought you 'abhorred the plebeian beverage!'"

"Do. Doctor's orders. Got to down it some way."

"Oh, Munchausen—go away back and take a seat in the extreme rear with the Has-Beens!" murmured young Oglevie, rolling his eyes.

"Mr. Parmalee drinks it because," Bettina looked demurely down with that little riddle of a smile about her lips, "because his sight doesn't focus on the brain, or the brain doesn't focus on—but no, that couldn't be it. Anyway, buttermilk is good for it. Warranted to cure in thirty days or money refunded. I read only a little while ago about a man down in Kentucky who died at the age of one hundred and six, and he left an affidavit to the effect that he had never in his whole life drank anything but Old Tom and buttermilk. So, of course, it stands to reason that it's bound to help one's brains register."

Then young Oglevie continued his interrupted conversation—

"You see, I played in the freshman eleven, Miss Lee, and if you read the athletics"—Bettina nodded brightly and passed Parmalee his glass, which appeared to him disgustingly and deliberately and nauseatingly full to overflowing—"then perhaps you know about the tackle I made on our five-yard line in the game with Pennsy"—Bettina batted her eyes and looked eloquent. One of Bettina's charms lay in her

being such an enraptured listener. Like Madame Récamier, she listened "*avec séduction*"—"after I'd chased their half-back from the field, you know. You see we held 'em there—so I saved the touchdown. Oh, it wasn't anything much" (with an air of its being a very great deal, an opinion in which Bettina evidently concurred) "but you know how the papers always try to make a hero of a fellow over nothing. Of course, they tried to make me out the Greatest Roman on the gridiron, and all that bally rot. They'll put me on the training-table first thing in the fall. Hello, here comes my tutor, Truesdale Blish. I see he's swallowed the buttermilk microbe along with the rest of us, and lines up every day. Say, honestly, he's the smartest ever! He forgets more o' nights than most fellows ever knew. Writing a book, too, when he isn't cramming the classics down me. Regular shark on Greek and maths. Mighty nice fellow, though; the best ever. The sort you can bank on—all wool and a yard wide. In his first two years at Cambridge he made a record on sprinting."

Suddenly he gave a wild guffaw. "And here's old Colonel Root, ambling hither for his daily fill-up. Blamed if I see how the old duffer *holds* so much buttermilk! Too bad the colonel's air of large benevolence and pomposity is always marred by one's memory of the butler."

Presently he was again addressing a soft aside to Bettina, though every word reached Parmalee's ears. "Of course you know I abhor this loathly stuff," holding up his glass, "but it just seems as if I can't get a word with you unless I have it over a foaming bumper of this diabolical essence of churned cow." Bettina laughed and made as if to replenish his glass. "Leander only swam the Hellespont to spend a few hours with *his* adored one—(no trick at all)—but I—why, I fill clear up to my Adam's apple on the beastliest drink that ever found its way down the protesting epiglottis of any human being—and why? Because your dear little hands serve it, bless 'em. I expect I'd drink bone-set

tea if you offered it, and never turn a hair. Say, on the square, I don't believe my tutor over there likes it a bit better than I do. He's making horrible faces—just like a Medusa mask."

"Infernal young cub," Parmalee breathed to himself all the way back to the inn. Before leaving Boston he would merely have pronounced young Oglevie "the recrudescence of degenerate imbecility." Which goes to show how far Parmalee had really traveled.

"She's got them *all* going now," he ruminated gloweringly, beheading harmless clover stalks along the path, "and she can flirt in prose, poetry and the deaf-and-dumb alphabet."

He passed the Parent of the Paragon, her finger between the pages of *Other Seas*, bound in blue-and-gold to match the color scheme of her drawing-room, and looked through her unseeing, quite as if she had been dining on fern-seed and was invisible.

He sat for some time on the veranda, playing a Rondo Capriccioso on the arm of his chair and occasionally murmuring: "Infernal young cub!" Then he rose suddenly and went upstairs with his anger, and something he could in no way define, a burning feeling of resentment against any male creature who dared pay court to her. A mad desire to demolish something swept over him. His eye fell by chance on the gray plaster dog on the mantel, with its goggling stare and its petrified grin.

With a step charged with portent, he crossed the room and dealt the plaster atrocity a resounding blow straight from the shoulder. It wobbled a moment on its bow legs and crashed to the floor. Parmalee grinned a moment horribly, then he took up a fat feather cushion from his rocking-chair, a cushion of the puffy variety, whose slippery feathers, when sat down upon, suggest a nest of small kittens, and with vicious aim he hurled this large, fat cushion at the Father of His Country, who for two generations has been patiently crossing the Delaware.

"I guess that's what those biblical chaps meant when they talked about the devil's entering into a fellow." He

dropped down by the window, mopping his forehead. "Who was it had the unique experience of seeing them chase down a steep hill into the sea? Was it Elijah? Confounded young *cub!*" Though this scathing peroration in no way referred to the prophet.

He smoked three large, black cigars, chewing on them hungrily; and, as tobacco was strictly tabooed by the Eminent Specialist, Parmalee had a secret sense of joy like a schoolboy reveling in conscious disobedience. As he sat there cooling off by the window, snatches of conversation which came to him from below led him to infer that "Pa Pierson" had once more "signed." Young Oglevie came strolling home an hour later, singing softly: "Entreat me not to leave thee," with a great effect of pianissimo and diminuendo on the last note.

"The Buttermilk Maid is driving quite a four-in-hand, isn't she?" drawled Clare Howe (whom Parmalee had come to dread like the scourge) as she met him the following morning on his return from the "Arbor of Aphrodite," as she now facetiously termed the spring-house. "Better hurry along and get into harness, Mr. Parmalee—you're late."

IV

"You are not going to drive those horses yourself, are you?" demanded Parmalee with a decided note of anxiety, as Bettina was preparing to climb into the buckboard.

"Certainly. Why not?" her chin lifted a little haughtily. "This buttermilk *has* to go to the station. The man-of-all-work cut his hand perfectly terribly yesterday on the scythe and can not drive. Ergo: since the buttermilk must go and I am the only Jehu available—"

"Permit me to drive for you, Miss Lee. I really am not a half bad hand with the ribbons," Parmalee heard himself saying, much to his own astonishment.

"Oh, very well, though I'm not at

all afraid of driving these horses." She drew her skirts aside with a pretty movement of her curved wrist, and Parmalee took his seat beside her. They drove for some time in absolute silence. The sun was very warm and not a breath of wind stirred. Bettina wore a blue gingham with a blouse open at the throat, and her hat was very gay. Parmalee sat erect, handling the reins in good style. The milk-cans jingled merrily behind them. "Let us take this road," said Bettina, indicating one at the left as they hesitated at a crossroad.

"It's much more hilly—"

"I don't care, it's much more picturesque, too. Who is taking this buttermilk to the station, anyway? I prefer the left-hand road," icily. "Mine not to reason why," shrugged Parmalee and looked straight between the horses' ears. They covered another half mile in silence.

"Are you—er—fond of Browning?" he demanded presently, feeling that the conversation must be launched on a high plane, even if much beyond this girl's comprehension.

"There have been moments," she admitted charily, "when I felt that I had faint *glimmerings* of his meaning. Though I have always been of the opinion that most of the time he didn't know what he meant himself. If only somebody would 'do over' Browning into English!"

And this to a Bostonian of the most azure hue! Parmalee was so horrified at this *lèse majesté* that he almost dropped the lines—and at that moment they started down a precipitous and rocky grade.

His foot was firmly on the brake and he tightened the lines about his hands. Behind them the milk-cans began a mad dance, their tin covers leaping with every stone. Bettina held on to her gay hat.

"Aren't we just flying?" she managed to articulate. "I feel like the old lady who said she always trusted in the Lord till the whiffle-tree broke."

Suddenly there was an ominous snap. The buckboard seemed to make a sudden tipsy lunge forward.

"I—er—rather fancy the brake's given way," announced Parmalee calmly—"sit tight."

"Oh, I believe the horrid things are running away!" wailed Bettina in a gasping staccato; and her first feminine instinct being to grasp Parmalee's arm, she proceeded to do so, in spite of knowing he needed all possible freedom of action. Whereupon he thundered in a voice she had never heard:

"Let go of my arm! How can I guide these fool horses if you hang on like that? Hold on to the seat, and hold tight. Don't jump!"

She was horribly frightened, yet a strange sensation of pleasure ran through her. She had been *ordered* to let go of his arm. She stole a glance—his lips were tight shut, his eyes black—the dislocated monocle swung dangling at the end of its string. "I knew he could look like that," was the thought that raced through her mind.

The horses had given a frightened leap forward when the buckboard struck their haunches, and were tearing down the steep incline at a break-neck speed. Bettina's head seemed almost to part company from her shoulders at the sudden jerk, and her gay hat went sailing off to parts unknown. Something clicked, and without looking back they both knew it was the covers of the buttermilk cans which had bounced off, and now strewed their pathway down the hill.

Stopping the frightened animals now was entirely out of the question; Parmalee could only guide them. And be it said to his credit he did it in a masterly manner. He gave one quick glance down at Bettina to assure himself she was not trying to jump. "You're all right. Sit tight," he said between his teeth, and gave his whole attention to the horses.

Where her blouse collar was turned back, the triangle of white flesh beat with the pulse in her throat like the breast of a frightened bird. But Parmalee heard her laugh.

On one curve the buckboard careened like a ship in a gale, balanced a moment uncertainly, and righted itself. It

was only one dizzy moment—but they both saw the rocks at the foot of the cliff.

Bettina gripped the seat tighter and said her prayers, beginning with "Now I lay me."

The wheels skidded briskly, a stone lifted them into the air, and Bettina, being much the lighter of the two, saved herself only by a more hysterical grip on the seat rail.

"That was an a-awful one, wasn't it?" she shrieked above the clatter of flying gravel and dancing milk-cans. "I guess the butter is all ch-churned by this time. Do you think it's time to put in the salt?"

She was pale, her heart was beating wildly, but a strange sense of elation possessed her. Parmalee had them guided back into the middle of the road now, and they were slackening speed a little.

Bettina loosened her grip on the seat when he warned: "There's a nasty bit ahead of us, that ledge of rock. At the rate we're still going it's likely to give us a bit of a jolt. Hang on!"

But already they were on the very point of striking the ledge, which under ordinary circumstances would have amounted to nothing, but at their present rate of speed might prove disastrous.

Then Parmalee the Particular, seeing the inevitable coming, did an unbelievable thing. He simply took both reins in his left hand and caught Bettina round the waist with his right. And they struck the ledge.

So did the buttermilk cans.

All but two of them went with a leap over the ledge. Those two, rattling together like castanets, reeled forward and dumped their entire contents on the two unfortunate occupants of the seat before them.

For a moment it seemed to Bettina that the very heavens rained buttermilk. It distributed itself indiscriminately and lavishly, even as the rain falleth upon the just and upon the unjust. She breathed buttermilk, tasted it, smelled it, swam in it.

When the buckboard once more

righted itself and settled to the earth from which it had soared, there was a warning crack and it lurched heavily to one side—Parmalee's side.

Before they could recover from this lurch, except that Bettina once more began "Now I lay me," there was another crack and the buckboard simply collapsed on that side, very much like the deacon's historic chaise "all at once and nothing first," and with one parting jounce dumped them unceremoniously at the side of the road. Parmalee flung the lines, and the exhausted horses came to a halt a little way down the road, snorting with terror.

Both aerolites scrambled quickly to a sitting posture, their first position having been much like that of the American eagle on a silver dollar. Parmalee's hat was off and his hair was plastered down with buttermilk much like mace around a nutmeg.

His coat-sleeve was torn and there was very little of his apparel which was not lavishly bestrewn with the creamy liquid. He grinned pleasantly.

"Oh, but wasn't it splendid!" sputtered Bettina, her face beaming through the buttermilk like a rose in June. "Wasn't it simply superb?"

"Wasn't *what* superb?"

"Why, the way you brought us down that grade *with a broken brake!* It was perfectly magnificent! Buffalo Bill couldn't have done it any better."

"Are you hurt? You must be."

"But I'm not—not a bit. Only it does seem as if my spinal column surely must be sticking right straight up through my hat. Why, my hat's GONE!"—she put up both hands to her hair, which was slipping about her shoulders—"and not a hairpin left! I'll just have to braid it and let it hang." Suddenly she burst into a wild catch of laughter and looked at Parmalee.

"Oh, if I could *tell* you how funny you look! Your trousers are just like a map of Egypt with the Nile marked out in buttermilk. Aren't we perfect *sights!* Do I look as funny as you do, I wonder? And such a shameful waste of good buttermilk, too! Why, we're simply *drenched* in it!"

"If you hadn't been so determined to take this road—"

"Oh, that's right!—follow the time-worn custom introduced by Adam of blaming the woman. It's always *cherchez la femme!* It's always *been* like that ever since the First Man hid behind a banana leaf and said 'the Woman ate it and gave me the core.'"

But looking at Parmalee she once more shrieked with wild laughter. "Wasn't it buttermilk that Nero's wife bathed in? How perfectly lovely our complexions will be! I never saw anything so funny as your *hair*." Parmalee was gently wiping his monocle; and suddenly she gave a little cry. "Oh, look at your hand! You've cut it—it's bleeding."

He continued polishing his monocle lovingly. "Caught it in the bally brake, I fancy. It's nothing. Don't go fainting now." (Women always fainted, he had been led to believe, at the psychological moment, when a man was in the right position to catch them.)

"Fainting!" glared Bettina through her mask of buttermilk, dabbling daintily at her eyebrows with a soaked handkerchief. "You must have been reading Victorian romances! Women don't faint nowadays—they walk across country sixteen miles for an ambulance, and then help lift the man on to the stretcher. Give me your handkerchief. If it isn't *too* soaked I'm going to make a bandage of it. Do you mind my tearing it into strips? If there was only some water near, but, of course, there isn't. In a Victorian romance there is always a babbling brook near, so that when the heroine faints, Claude Algeron can fill his hat; and when she 'comes to' her Marcelle wave is straight as a shad. I'm sorry I laughed at you—and your hand hurt like that."

She lifted her disconcerting glance, and crimped waves went all over Parmalee. She was very near, and there was a fresh fragrance from her hair like meadow-sweet. Her eyes were compassionate, and at the glance his head swam; suddenly the blood pounded in his temples. His heart

seemed to be beating visibly in his throat. It swept over him like a revelation what warm rapture life might be.

But he got himself suddenly in hand. "Thank you," he said coldly. It was the old Parmalee. He realized dizzily how near he had been to the brink.

"Hello! What's up? Anybody hurt?" The voice came from the direction of the road, and they both faced about suddenly. A light road-cart had just come into view round a curve in the road. A stout gentleman was driving, and beside him was a little Dresden china figure of a woman. She wore a lavender linen gown embroidered in iris of a deeper shade, and her transparent lace hat bore a wreath of iris which drooped over the brim. A white parasol was held at a graceful angle over her shoulder. She seemed to suggest that line of Mrs. Brownings: "Vacuity trimmed with lace." To Parmalee she symbolized that world wherein his orbit lay, and whose criterion he had ever aimed to be.

"Is it? No, it *can't* be. Yes, it *is* Parmalee. That eye! Those nose! 'Tis he!" And a laugh rang out from the big man which must have given violent palpitation to all the little furry forest creatures thereabouts. "You remember Parmalee, don't you, Zélie? You met him last summer at the Sturtevents. Hi there, Parmalee, what's the trouble? Had a break-down?" He had drawn up beside the road now, and the lady in lavender had joined in the laugh in spite of herself.

Parmalee was purple with embarrassment, but he carried off the situation with astonishing aplomb. "Mrs. Van Treen, I believe?" he said, advancing with his best drawing-room manner. "Pardon my left hand. How are you, Cummings? Just had a little accident, that's all—nothing alarming. Came down that grade over there at a pretty stiff gait, struck a rock, and the buck-board being in its last declining day—er—disintegrated, as it were."

"Look like you'd been playing tag with a dairy-cart." The stout man shook silently. Then he lowered his

voice: "And the wood nymph, Parmalee. By Jove! present me to the wood nymph. Did you ever see such hair, Zélie? How in thunder did you get so soaked up with milk?" He went into shaking laughter, his eyes disappearing in rolls of fat. To see Parmalee, Boston's glass of fashion and mold of form, in this predicament was better than a play. "You look like the last half hour at a rummage sale, Parmalee," he managed to articulate between spasms.

The wood nymph being duly presented exchanged amenities with becoming modesty. "We're at the Donnybrook club," said the stout man. "Where are you putting up, Parmalee? I supposed you were where the breaking waves dash high on the stern and rockbound coast of Newport. What you doing in these wilds, anyway?"

"Came here for quiet and rest," grinned Parmalee, with a wave of his hand toward the demolished buckboard and the buttermilk cans.

"I don't mind the walk back at all," beamed Bettina, wringing the buttermilk from her handkerchief and dimpling delightfully. "Mr. Parmalee can pick up the cans. Then we can lead the horses—it isn't far—back to the inn. You see, we were going to the station with the buttermilk cans; they were all full when we started—but they aren't *now*," she added with a laugh that brought her entire battery of dimples into play.

V

IN the days that followed the number of unflattering adjectives which Parmalee applied to himself was in itself a wonderful triumph over the limitations of language. In the beginning he had said, as the fool speaketh, "I must not flatter or mislead this unsophisticated girl by bestowing upon her too markedly my distinguished attentions." For Parmalee had brought his New England conscience as well as his portable bath-tub into these wilds. Again he said, as the fool speaketh, "I have simply fallen into a quagmire of

sentimental slush." He called it that because there is always a certain pleasure in vituperative metaphor. It was a sort of escape-valve for his inward disgust with himself. It was all this Arcadian environment and propinquity—

"Damn it, it's propinquity," said Particular Parmalee, who before leaving Boston had rarely if ever made a remark which could not be found in a *Manual of Correct Deportment*. He held long, condemnatory "sessions" with himself, in which he mentally flayed and scourged himself.

In love with a mere country girl, a nobody—the thing was not to be thought of! He was so smitten with sentimental vertigo he was like a man "fey," demented. When he made self-laudatory remarks she brought it home to him in a whimsically original way that he was merely one of the many flies that clung 'round the orange.

His only safety lay in flight and he knew it. And he said to himself in language not elegant but forceful that he would turn tail and run. He took long, solitary walks in the velvet-shod silence of the wood, and in these melancholy conferences with his inner self he took out his soul and looked at it. Not as a man who wears a monocle would look at it, but as a primitive human being who knows beyond a peradventure that he has been touched "by a snap from the divine lash." He no longer tried to reason himself out of the fact that he was in love with this little country girl, the daughter of some horny-fisted follower of the plow.

At low moments of vitality Parmalee often had a mental picture of this possible father-in-law appearing suddenly in town, and being necessarily presented to his friends. And at such moments, when this picture flashed across the retina of his mind's eye, he always sat down suddenly, owing to the weakness of his knees.

Yet following this awful picture would come a vision of what it would be like to see Bettina's face opposite him, over the coffee-urn every morning. Of how her hands would look among the old blue Canton cups that were an

heirloom in the Parmalee family. Of all the little intimate things that mean companionship!—and of what it would be like to crush that warm, sweet mouth with kisses—his senses reeled with the thought. But he would cut and run. Yes, that was the only salvation possible to him now; he would cut and run.

Of course a man of his position must eventually marry, he owed it to posterity!—and there was Mary Elkins, now—she would be coming home soon. He had always thought, vaguely—

As the daughter of Whitelaw V. Elkins, whose card was almost a prayer in the sanctum sanctorum of Boston's best, she was altogether desirable.

She had been a mere slip of a girl when Parmalee had seen her last, thin and virginal as a saint's candle, almost as colorless—quite as tallowy. But one never knew. These extremely young girls, flavorless as underdone veal, sometimes developed marvelously—into real beauties. Doubtless she was a very charming girl now, having been educated entirely abroad; she would be coming home soon, to take her place in that exalted hierarchy wherein wealth, and family, and position would entitle her to move. Yes, he would return to the haunts of his own kind—he would meet Mary Elkins, and perhaps . . .

VI

HE had been in town three weeks when he saw a notice of her return.

Not unmindful of Polonius's immortal advice as to the effect of swagger raiment, absolutely *comme il faut* even to the gardenia in his buttonhole, Parmalee made his call of ceremony.

As he sat there in the big, chaste drawing-room waiting for Mary Elkins to come down, he was fighting a silent battle of revolt.

These weeks in town had been a horror. He had lost flesh, lost sleep, and there were weary-looking lines under his eyes.

Twice he had been on the point of

going back to Pott's Crossing and of telling Bettina that he could not live without her. Once he had even gone the length of flinging a few things into a portmanteau, eluding the vigilant and Argus-eyed Titcomb, and, lost to all thought of even his portable bath-tub, he had found himself at the station about to take the train. Then he had "come to," as it were, like a somnambulist who has walked off the elevator shaft and has brought up in the basement.

"Titcomb," he had said, after his return from the station that day, looking white and fagged, "you keep an eye on me. I have attacks of dementia, probably caused from this non-registering lobe in my brain. It's the deuce and all to have a non-registering lobe, Titcomb. At such moments, when the attack seizes me, I seem to have an uncontrollable mania to board a train and get out of town. Don't you let me get aboard a train, Titcomb. If you see me doing it, just come up quietly and say: 'Mr. Parmalee, sir, *you're as mad as a March hare.*' Just say that, Titcomb, in a calm and soothing way."

"Yes, sir. All right, sir. 'As mad as a March 'are, sir,'" echoed the invaluable Titcomb, quite as if the sentiment had found birth and fruition in his own mind.

Parmalee saw her, across the length of the long reception-hall, as she came down the stairs, her hand on the mahogany rail.

She walked with a peculiarly graceful, undulating movement. He hoped she would have repose of manner. That repose which marked the caste of Vere de Vere was of all things most desirable in the woman whom he should honor with an offer of marriage.

She wore a long, trailing gown which clung in a curiously individual way to her slender lines. It was some delectable shade of blue which must have been ripped from the edge of a summer cloud, and there were little extinct stars in it; dull silver stars that so melted into the blue they seemed an interwoven part of it.

Then, suddenly, he was conscious

that there was something very wrong indeed with that non-registering lobe in his brain; that he beheld things not as they were, but as some inner vision and memory reflected itself and seemed to take form and substance before him. For the girl who came smiling toward him, little glints of light shining in her eyes, was certainly not Mary Elkins. It was Bettina Lee. To all outward seeming, at least, it was Bettina. And he caught a quick breath at the beauty of her, and at the ghastly consciousness that something must be very wrong indeed when a man "saw things" in this way in broad daylight.

"Oh, please don't look so appalled and as if you saw a real live spook!" laughed the voice he remembered as Bettina's. "And please sit down. You are awfully white."

Still with her laughing eyes upon him she made a little motion toward a chair, with that pretty curved movement of her wrist which had clung so persistently to Parmalee's memory.

"Yes, it is Bettina. It is 'The Buttermilk Maid,'" she nodded brightly. "It was a *grande succès*, as the delightful French say, wasn't it?—my little comedy? You never had even the shadow of a suspicion, did you?"

She came and sat down near him, and laughed that dulcet, lute laugh of hers. And as his eyes dwelt on her the color mounted slowly, like wine under the transparent olive of her skin. He was conscious of that little ghostly perfume that was like a mere sweetness of body.

He looked at her and gasped like a man just emerging from under water, who has lost his breath. He was dimly conscious of taking out his handkerchief and dabbling the moisture on his forehead.

His lips were white and his hand shook perceptibly. The shock of first believing himself actually demented, and almost instantly awakening to the fact that this was no figment of the brain, but Bettina herself in flesh and blood. . . .

"I—I didn't know you were going to be *quite* so much astonished." It was

Bettina's apologetic voice just after a quarrel. "It was a little game, you know; or rather you *don't* know—"

"But you said—you were Bettina Lee—"

"Yes, I know. And so I *am*. I am 'long' on family names. Mary Bettina Lee Elkins. Isn't it dreadful to be handicapped like that? But I have always been called just Mary. You see, it was like this: I came home from abroad (unheralded, because no one knew I was coming so soon) just a few days after you left for the country. I found out where you had gone; I followed, and a few days afterward the little comedy was on. I was such a very young girl when you had known me that I knew you would remember me only as a little red-headed thing, all big eyes and pipe-stem legs, and awed to a breathless silence whenever I was allowed to come into The Presence."

She laughed and gave him that alluring side-glance under her velvet lashes. She spoke rapidly, with quick motions of her hands. All her little mannerisms, her clever quips and phrases were Bettina's own.

"Of course every girl has an Ideal; someone she boosts up on a pedestal and says her prayers to." She gave him the full sweep of her lashes. "You were mine. It had always been sort of an understood thing that when I grew up I was to fall in love with you."

Her face was all one sparkle of animation, and Parmalee's breath caught in his throat as he watched her. "Perhaps I have rather an adventurous streak, but any way I longed to find out if you would care for me, just for myself, you know. Not as the daughter of Whitelaw V. Elkins—but just for *myself*. I admit I am a little morbid on the subject of not wanting to be married for my father's money, and my inherited social status, and all that. It may be quixotic—but I feel that way. I persuaded that dear old 'Aunt Serena,' as everyone calls her, to let me preside at the 'buttermilk fount,' and pass myself off as a little country girl; and I flatter myself I played the part

pretty well. Will you ever forget our buttermilk bath?"

He told her no, he would never forget that. And the words had a strange sound. He remembered that mad moment, when he had fought with himself and had come off such a craven conqueror.

"And my hat!" laughed Bettina with a comical *moue*. "Wasn't it simply the frenzied nightmare of a country milliner's dream? I trimmed it myself. I *tried* to make it funny, and I guess it was, all right. I came awfully near putting a feather on it too."

For some wholly atavistic reason they both rose and stood facing each other, a little apart. Parmalee put his hands behind him. He seemed to put them there so they would not touch Bettina.

A singular look came into her face. "You *did* rather like me, didn't you, Mr. Parmalee, though we quarreled shockingly sometimes?" Her eyes were serious now, and their glance seemed to cut through all subterfuge and hypocrisy as a sword cuts through cobwebs. Parmalee looked at her and drew his courage to his teeth.

He knew that she knew; that she had weighed and measured his soul for just its actual weight and measurement. One of those moments when a man strips his consciousness bare and views himself, naked and afraid, was upon Parmalee. Few can walk through the white light of that inner sanctuary and come out stepping like gods.

Bettina's eyes, brimming with truth, were on his now, and her voice was very low: "You know, in that pretty, old, medieval tale of The Prince and the Peasant, the Prince didn't recognize the Princess in her peasant garb. And he rode away."

She let the words fall as if each held its weight of subtle meaning. "And he rode away." Parmalee was not dense when once he was keyed up to his present pitch—and the subtle meaning sank deep.

She shifted her gaze to the Louis Quinze cabinet, and her voice was so low he could barely hear it: "It's a

mistake to elevate an idol on too high a pinnacle. Because it has such an awful ways to tumble—if it ever *does* fall." Then she lifted her eyes and Parmalee wondered if there ever *had* been a man before who felt as small as he did and was yet visible to the naked eye.

"Sometime, Mr. Parmalee," she said gently, coming up to him with that little waft of sweetness that was like a rose, "I hope—I do truly hope, you may find the woman whose flawless impeccability, from a worldly standpoint, whose antecedents and traditions and—and all that, may absolutely match your own."

Something lay behind her eyes. Was it that she remembered the obsequies with which she had interred that shattered Ideal?

"And that finding her you may be very happy. Really I do. I hope you will find her, and that you may be very happy."

Parmalee had gone white as a sun-bleached bone—but he took it standing.

"Sometimes," her gaze again sought the Louis Quinze cabinet, "the little masquerade amused, immensely. And sometimes it—hurt."

They stood in tense silence a moment, and Parmalee saw her bosom lift with her quick breathing. When she raised her eyes and her soft gaze lay on his face, it seemed to him that he visibly shriveled. They stood so a moment, then she turned her head with a quick, bird-like movement. Her expression changed and brightened.

"Pardon me. Just a moment, please. I think there is some one in the hall." The pretty, swaying movement of her body as she crossed the room, the soft blue drapery that clung in that individual way to her girlish lines, all seemed to shriek at the man who watched her: "Fool! Fool! Imbecile!" His eyes followed her as she passed through the heavy portières which were left parted behind her.

And then Parmalee sustained another shock fully as unnerving as the one he had just passed through.

He had a dissolving view of young

Oglevie's tutor, Truesdale Blish, his big tweed-clad shoulders just shaken out of his topcoat.

There was a bit of low-voiced conversation; Bettina gave a little joyful cry, then both her white hands went up to the young man's face, on either cheek, and she drew his face down and kissed him on the lips.

Unconsciously Parmalee gripped the arm of his chair and his knuckles went white. He wondered vaguely if that non-registering lobe were accountable for *this*. Then he was conscious that Bettina's eyes in the hall-mirror met his eyes. He heard her give a little tremulous laugh; then she took the young man's hand with the serenest and prettiest air of possession, that went through Parmalee like a knife—and together, hand in hand, like two children, they came into the room.

"Oh, we may as well make a clean breast of it now!" beamed Bettina, dimpling and debonair—"Mr. Parmalee saw us in the mirror."

Young Blish gave him a friendly grip, and Parmalee shook hands as if he had mislaid his asbestos gloves and was compelled to handle something at a high degree of heat. Happiness radiated from these two; it seemed to Parmalee it was almost like a visible essence.

"Tell Mr. Parmalee about your book being accepted"; her eyes caressed young Blish shamelessly. Then, woman-like, she gave him no chance to tell, by reason of proceeding at once to tell herself:

"I—I was just congratulating him in the hall, you know," she explained radiantly, with an air of its being quite the accepted thing to congratulate young men in that way. "He only just stopped in a moment to give me the joyful tidings that his book has just been accepted by a publisher. Tell Mr. Parmalee about it, dear—"

The little word slipped out quite as a matter of course—but it struck Parmalee between the eyes like a flung missile.

"It seems of such small importance, my book being accepted, in comparison,"—he colored, looked at Bettina, and her eyes homed to him.

"He means having his book accepted seems of such small importance in comparison to—to having been accepted *himself*. Yes, it's really true, Mr. Parmalee. It's a week today since it happened. It was in the spring-house, and I was just putting the tops on the buttermilk cans. And I guess if I hadn't accepted him he would have abducted me, with assault and battery complications."

And then the two young things looked at each other and laughed the peculiar laugh of the very-much-in-love. And young Blish evidently restrained himself only by a supreme effort of will from a repetition of the osculatory tableau of the hall. Then he backed from the room in a manner most acceptably Chesterfieldian, nodding to Parmalee, and apologizing that he had not a moment, really, and was gone.

"You see," explained Bettina, coming back into the room with a flush of radiant color burning through her face, and her eyes like stars, "it was while he thought I was just Bettina, the 'Buttermilk Maid.'" (When she looked at Parmalee like that he thought of *Alice in Wonderland*, when Alice ate the magic cookie and shrunk perceptibly.)

"He said that he was going to take care of me the rest of my natural life, and it didn't make one bit of difference whether I permitted it or not. He was just as fierce as that! He said that nobody again in this big brute of a world could ever make love to me without having him to reckon with. Oh, he was magnificent, I can tell you!" She gave a little reminiscent laugh. "He was a regular cave man! I saw at once he was going to boss me awfully the rest of my whole life. I don't know whether I can make you understand how much a woman *likes* that in the man she—loves. Why, for a minute, when I pretended to hesitate (for, of course, I had to pretend I didn't know he was going to say it—a woman always does, you know, though I would have just *died* if he hadn't said it) I actually thought for a minute that he was going to *beat* me. Of course, one has to show a little decent hesitation, and not just

grab a man, as if he was the only one on earth—just because he happens to be the only one you love. I almost thought he was going to beat me; and do you know—I think I would rather have *liked* it. I never was beaten in my whole life, never anything more than just spanked easy—oh, *very* easy, as every person is, when at the spanking age. And now—I know what it is to be loved for myself. Because he really thought I was just a penniless little country girl—and he didn't *care*. When he found out who I really was he was almost for backing out—only I wouldn't let him. And, oh, we are going to be so happy—I can't *tell* you! Sometimes it makes me almost afraid."

VII

PARMALEE dragged his crushed atoms into a cab and sat like a man in a trance all the way back to what the society papers always referred to as his "luxurious apartments." Three days later, having with much difficulty convinced Titcomb that in this particular instance his master was not laboring under acute dementia in wishing to board a train, he left for New York; and a fortnight later for Europe.

He spent two years on the Continent, walking through miles of picture-galleries, staring at scenery, yawning at table d'hôtes, bored to extinction most of the time, growing hopelessly world-weary and *blasé*. One day in Naples he read in a Boston paper an account of Bettina's marriage. That night, sitting tilted back in an uncomfortable wicker chair on the balcony outside his window, he outwatched the stars. One morning in May he stepped off a train in the Boston station, weary, travel-stained, unaccountably depressed for a man returning to his native land after two years of wandering up and down upon the earth. A sickening consciousness was upon him that no one person would be especially overjoyed to see him; that he was essential to no one human being's happiness. And to be essential to the happiness of at least one

human being is as natural a desire to the heart of man as the instinct of self-preservation.

A reporter, catching sight of him, scribbled a hasty line in his note-book. "Back for some time, Mr. Parmalee?" he inquired professionally. "Indefinitely," gave out Parmalee, with his furthest-north expression. ("Who the dickens cares how long I'm back for?" was his inward thought.) His eyes at that moment were on a chubby boy of three or four who was making violent efforts to free himself from the detaining hands of a nurse who held him in leash. A heavily upholstered gentleman with a face freshly shaven and beaming with anticipation, stepped off the train. The child was released, flew to the stout gentleman with a vociferous yell of joy, was caught and clasped. . . . For some unaccountable reason Parmalee looked away quickly. What would it be like—warm little arms about your neck like that? There was a tight feeling in the region of his throat. One of those moments that jump at us suddenly out of the Might-Have Been was upon him—lines from Carryl's *In the Avenue Du Bois* ran through his mind:

"The wraiths of dreams denied brush by me,
And I find my unborn bairns in strangers' eyes."

The dull, level lovelessness of the years stretched out before him. There had been but One Woman in the world for him and he knew it. He had missed the vernal heyday; and that "something sweet that follows youth with flying feet and can never come again" was not for him. The air of the May morning seemed suddenly chill.

He looked about. A great many people seemed uncommonly glad to see a great many other people. They talked, and laughed, and got into cabs or private carriages and drove away. They were going home, most likely. Parmalee was sickeningly conscious that he was returning to "luxurious apartments."

"That's 'Particular' Parmalee," he heard a young man say under his breath, as he passed him, talking rapidly

to another youth at his side who turned and eyed Parmalee with a sort of reverential awe. "Tremendous swell, you know. The Real Thing."

Parmalee's laugh was not a pleasant thing to hear. "Yes, too damnably 'particular,'" he jeered at himself in a kind of futile fury at the aching loneliness, the hunger, the lack, the unspeakable sense of isolation that gripped him like a physical hand at his throat . . . "and, perhaps, if I could have been a hero and not a snob when she weighed me in the balance, I might have had heaven without the bother of dying first."

A man whom Parmalee instantly recognized as Truesdale Blish stepped from another coach at that moment, and looked about as if in search of some one. From a carriage which stood waiting at a little distance, a woman put out a little suède-clad foot, then emerged and stood there waiting, her white frock, frothy with Valenciennes, gath-

ered up carelessly in her hand. It was Bettina. And it struck Parmalee that she was the type of beautiful young woman, the peculiarly American patrician type, whom exclusive English people, meeting for the first time, intuitively invite to tea.

She stood there, incarnate radiance, and as Blish came up to her and stooped from his great height, she lifted her face and kissed him twice.

Parmalee, who was just stepping into a cab where the invaluable Titcomb had deposited a portion of his luggage, made a queer sound in his throat. "Why did she do it *twice*, Titcomb?" he demanded childishly. "Why did she do it twice when once would have sufficed?"

The invaluable Titcomb, who was absorbed in tucking a traveling-rug about his master's immaculate legs, answered absentmindedly: "I don't know, sir. Most like it's only 'abit, sir."



POVERTY

By Aloysius Coll

AS poor am I as that old anchorite
That feeds upon his shadow till he dies—
You took from me your fingers warm and white,
And turned away your eyes!

Poor as the wandering bard that strikes alone
His last regret upon a broken chord—
For grieving silence sits where I had known
The music of your word!

As poor as any little orphan child
That steals away, unmothered, to his rest—
You cast away the rose of love that smiled
A moment in your breast!

Ah, poor, indeed, as blossoms from the South
That wither with a storm of woman's tears—
The lightning burned a moment on your mouth—
In ashes lie the hopes of all my years!

ONE WORD MORE

By Grace Lewis Henley

JOHN and I argued at length last evening before a cozy driftwood fire—John, my cousin twice removed, man of affairs, middle-aged, unwed, and I, Frances, with a modest accumulation of years and a lavish stock of ideals, likewise unwed. It was the argument of a man versus a maid, of middle age versus youth. Each felt that the other did not see things as they are—he because of the maid's youth and inexperience, and she because of the wear and tear of the man's forty years, many interests, diverse occupations.

It began in this way: I told him of my reading a quotation the other day to the effect that the capacity for a great and lasting love between man and woman is as rare as the capacity to compose a great opera. John agreed at once with the sentiment. His haste was annoying in itself. I remarked that if human nature was as poverty-stricken as that I was weary of life already, and this drew forth the reply that it was my acquaintance with human nature that was poverty-stricken. John now and then assumes an air of large patience with me that is exasperating.

But I could not help thinking dejectedly how hard it would be to have to learn that enduring love comes only rarely, and I must have looked as dejected as I felt, for John instantly grew moral and paternal and said that one of the great things the little girl would have to cultivate was a friendly understanding of the *nature of human nature*. It does bother me when John steps outside of things and facts, surveying, classifying, labeling them and finally philosophizing about them, so I did not pay very reverent attention to

his adding something about uncomplaining realization of the limitations of human nature, and something more about accepting them with humorous tenderness and without a whimper. Instead, I announced firmly that it was a tremendous comfort to me to dwell rather on the wonderful qualities humanity has already revealed and the suggestions of what man will yet become. This caused this cousin of mine twice removed to address the fire rather sadly on the pity of it all that this charming simplicity and enthusiasm of youth did not and could not survive middle age, and the low, blue flames in the fireplace held his gaze a long time. Not at all overcome by this sigh over the defeat of youth in the onslaught of later life, I reminded him of Wordsworth's saying that it was the duty of older people to recover through meditation the simplicity of childhood. John laughed aloud at this and made some irreverent remarks, which I shall not repeat, on the vast vagueness of Wordsworth's recipe for the recovery of the charms of early childhood through meditation, and how the greater part of the things this poet said were of no value at all. I frowned disapprovingly (to John's further amusement), but heroically resolved to postpone the settlement of the value of Wordsworth until another day, and to stick to the subject before the house.

It was because the world's work and material progress and money-getting occupied the world's attention so largely today, I remarked, and because divorces and the waywardness of people in high places took up so much space in the newspapers, that the existence of many, many cases of great and lasting love between man and woman went unob-

served, and a certain fickle, paltry emotion passed as human love. "There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned," I quoted. John indulged again in that look of large patience with the working of my juvenile mind, and then becoming quite serious said that human love for the most part could be reckoned, that we have to put up with a beggarly kind of love, and that we do it, sometimes patiently, sometimes impatiently, sometimes humorously, sometimes—in a rare now and then—because there is an inspiring example of love great enough to be an epic passion.

I objected to the rare now and then. This objection made John lean forward in his chair and exclaim how comparatively few of the biographies of the world's famous people revealed love triumphing over long separation, trying circumstances, the flight of time, the charms of others. My interruption to the effect that he was probably thinking of old Bible times, when it was meet and right to have forty loves and forty wives, or the old days of the Greeks whose high gods themselves had a brand-new love-affair with each brand-new springtime in the Elysian Fields, or still of the ancient Roman days when inconstancy was more fashionable than constancy, caused John to say far be it from him to look into ancient centuries for what he had difficulty in finding in modern days. He was taking his example after the first day of the eleventh century when, Myers and Allen led him to believe in the old academy days, the world turned its back on the Dark Ages and resolved to become revived and modern. Then he added that he had been about to remark, when interrupted, that it was kindly Death that made Romeo and Juliet eternal lovers, bestowing on them immortal youth and immortal love and cheating Life out of the trial of love. And it was the same with Paolo and Francesca. He could recall only a few instances of perfect love like that of the Brownings, of Petrarch for Laura, of Dante for Beatrice, but they are like great stars blazing across the night of time. John's earnestness melted into

quick amusement over his simile, and I could not refrain from murmuring something about accepting the limitations of human nature with humorous tenderness and without a whimper.

Other girls I know confess to a certain tongue-tied fear of John, when he grows eloquent and says the last word on the subject up for discussion, but whether I am an example of the traditional American lack of reverence for my elders and betters, or that he is my cousin twice removed and that I am his at the same distance, I am never overwhelmed by John discoursing. This confession is probably to my discredit—if you knew John you would demand that I confess it with underscoring and italics. And worst of all I do not outgrow my feminine way of still believing my side of the case, even after John has carefully and eloquently settled the argument in favor of his side.

So I responded that I believed there were thousands and thousands of these love-stars "shining across the night of time." Behold the Tennysons, the Wordsworths, Rembrandt and Saskia, Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, I added, thinking of a few famous examples at random. But it is in the less brilliant or notable walks of life one would find constant and enduring love more common. There were countless cases of one great passion illuminating the lives of lovers whose names and stories were never recorded. To this "my honorable opponent" replied that if we (this friendly "we" was accompanied by a friendly glance) were able to look into the "simple annals" of the people proper of the past, we would find comparatively few examples of great, enduring love. He claimed that we would find countless wedded pairs, whose lives jogged along together, animated only by the habit of years, the common interest in children, or the material comforts marriage can bring, but not by the grand passion. Now and then we would find the record of a golden wedding, where Fate had been kind. He allowed that a rare husband or wife would be discovered making no substitute for a lost mate in lonely

years, or a rare man or maid living true to the uninterrupted love of a man or maid never to be won, but generally it would be the old story of another face and another love as the years went on.

John's peace-making "we" was calming at this juncture, when he and I were at such a tremendous distance apart (and a growing distance, too), so I quietly replied that I still thought "we" would find that the cases of faithful and unending love were very common.

At this he laughed out loud, and after exclaiming in a hopeless, though amused way, "Why, my child, it was much the same in the past as it is to-day!" observed that youths and maids, men and women fall in love and swear by high heaven that theirs is eternal love, that it will last until death and beyond. And then, John maintained, it is rather the ordinary thing after a short while to hear of "the wane of the ecstatic period" (he had the grace to chuckle over this phrase), and there is a loveless adjustment for the rest of life, or there is a parting of the ways because of incompatibility of temper, mental cruelty—yea, even failure to provide, or the discovery of another affinity (in the past they did not name the reasons so explicitly), and since human nature is frail, and the great vows so solemnly sworn are not long-lived, deep-lived enough, impatience, injured pride, jealousy, turn the great love to ashes. Or terrible death separates, John added quietly and rather sadly.

Here I contended that a great and beautiful love cannot die and that there are many, many loves today, great enough to survive years of separation, loneliness, or the lack of creature comforts that a happy marriage generally offers. But that irrepressible John exclaimed on the commonness of second and third engagements, of second wives and second husbands. He had even known of third marriages, and had heard and observed that in many cases the thrice-wed bride or groom had known a happy marriage in each venture.

I did not confess it aloud, but it made me uncomfortable just then to remember having heard several widows who had known happy love-marriages say, after the loneliness and trial of several years, that they would marry again for the sake of a home and the care of a good man. But then, as I remarked to John, a second marriage did not necessarily mean the death of the great love of a life. And I recalled the instance of a famous man—we both knew him—who had wooed and won his first and only love, the little maid he had loved as a boy, and whose marriage was considered an ideal union of heart and mind and soul through thirty wonderful years, until death took her from him two years ago. And this man, realizing that there could be only one love for him, had just been married again to a fine, strong woman, deeply in sympathy with his life-work, and a friend of his first wife; for, as he confessed, a second marriage was the only way open to him to give the care of his young son and his home into the keeping of the right kind of a woman. As for the new wife, I told John, enthusiastically, she is happy and understands, and probably in her heart of hearts is living true to an undying love for a lover of other days.

To this John made a cynical reply to the effect that "there's beggary in the love that can be reckoned"—in plural betrothals or plural marriages. He had his doubts about the survival of a great living love for the first wife (in the case I had cited) in the happy, comfortable comradeship the husband was knowing with the second wife. To live after the cruel separation of death, John added, even these great passions must be fed by living memories and a consciousness of spiritual nearness of soul to soul, but the busy, rushing, crowded life of a man of affairs combined with an intimate and happy association with a very attractive woman, is not conducive to the renewal of the old flame on Love's altar. In such a case there is more likely to be the memory of a great love rather than the love itself.

At this point it made me angry to

have the advice which Grandmother gave to Aunt Elizabeth several days ago leap out of oblivion into my mind. Aunt Elizabeth was speaking of the twins being ready to send away to college, and since it was impossible for Uncle to leave his business, she did not know whether it was best to go with the children and leave Uncle, or to stay at home and trust Jean and Bob to face their college life without her. Grandmother spoke firmly on the necessity of a husband and wife remaining together—of the mistake it was for a husband and wife to grow accustomed to living apart, and wondered how, in the happiest marriages, they could do so. It was better to get some fine woman in the college town to board "the children," much better than to leave Uncle alone, even though he was one of the dearest and best men in the world. There was too great a risk of many unpleasant things, Grandmother concluded.

The necessity of prudence in the presence of love! Why not simply unlimited love and faith?

I was awakened from this uncomfortable dream into which I had fallen by John's saying in a triumphant voice, that of course he would see me next Wednesday evening at Frank Wade's wedding. And then to have this cousin of mine twice removed (who before this has always had the grace never to join that mighty and inflated band of "What did I tell you?" and "I told you so" croakers) actually remark that he had always known that time and another girl—the other girl—would win out with Frank, though Frank had vowed by all visible things (he is a materialist) that though the girl in the case had proved faithless and broken the engagement, there could be no other for him. Loving her once and entirely must be sufficient for him, he had said. But three years and the right maid had shipwrecked that vow and there would be the wedding he (John) had prophesied, though he had given Frank five years.

I drew back from the fire, for I was too warm. My cheeks were flushed

and I felt weary of this tilt with cold-blooded middle age and annoyed with the memories of the seasoned advice of old age. As I cooled off, I found myself reviving with the cheering memory of dear old Mr. Porter's confessing to Father that he once was betrothed to a lovely girl, but though he released her later from the engagement, for one day she realized she cared more for another, and though she married the other man, he loved her and her only "these thirty years," he had said. I was just going to remind my opponent of this faithful love, being cool and comfortable again, when John, who had also been lost in thought, broke out exclaiming how splendid it was after all that Wade was capable of two sincere loves—that he was vulnerable to the flight of time and the second maid. Was that not better than having one fruitless, unhappy epic passion? We are all born again after great experiences, John continued, and the fine thing is, that the *new* Wade is to have a new love and a new life. John's face and voice softened becomingly as he rejoiced in Frank's new happiness. I, too, was glad of this second love-affair, though I did not see anything very romantic in it. I preferred to think of dear Mr. Porter's fidelity and said so, but John shook his head and remarked how much better "Wade's case" was than "poor old Porter's." Then he turned and, giving me one of the looks that I call his Ancient Mariner looks, he commended the fact that the capacity for great and lasting epic affections between man and woman is as rare as the capacity to compose a great opera.

No, I never know tongue-tied fear of John, as I confessed before, but when he feels that the case is settled, that the last word has been said, and then looks over at me with a glance that seems to rejoice in our coming out of the argument agreeing perfectly—or rather in my agreeing with him—I do know unrestrained exasperation. He evidently read that emotion in my answering glance, for he immediately asked me to sing his favorite, "My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose," indis-

creetly remarking about its author's being that poet of many loves who had vowed to many a maid,

"Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run."

John laughed to himself as he finished the lines and then merrily congratulated the world on its good fortune that Bobby Burns had the capacity to fall in love countless times.

But wouldn't I sing for him? I coldly refused, reflecting that I did not care even to speak any longer in a musical voice, that most excellent thing in woman. Thereupon, this cousin of mine twice removed said cheerfully that it was late and that he must go, and there was a maddening smile in his eyes and about his mouth as he said goodnight singing.

"And fare thee weel, my only love!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile."

This morning I sent John this note:

DEAR COUSIN JOHN:

This maid presents her compliments and begs to state that after the overwhelming evidence presented last night of the frailty of human love, it has been a great comfort to her to receive in the morning mail a catalogue from a Southern California ostrich farm,

in which, along with a description of the farm, the birds, their habits, and the prices of the plumes, the constancy of the ostrich is set forth. It appears that this bird chooses one partner, and if by any chance it loses its mate, it is inconsolable, remaining true to its lost love the rest of its life. If enduring love between man and woman is as rare as it was reported to be last evening, there is one maid who prefers to reach middle age observing the constancy of the ostrich rather than the inconstancy of man.

Respectfully submitted,
FRANCES.

This reply came this afternoon with a box of pink roses and violets:

DEAR LITTLE GIRL:

John humbly presents his compliments, the accompanying flowers, the following quotations, and a most anxious request.

First, speaking of the ostrich, may I quote this encyclopedia information? "Like all running birds, the ostrich is polygamous, the male consorting with from two to four females."

Secondly, a recent number of *Life* offers these "Consoling Thoughts About the Young": "Do not expect too much conversational wisdom from the young. There are two classes of young persons: those who do not think at all and those who think wrong. To think right requires knowledge and of that the young can have only a very limited supply. A young person who therefore utters mistaken opinions, is not necessarily foolish, but gives the only evidence possible of having begun to think and of being therefore in a hopeful state of progress."

But the important thing is, will you go to the opera with me Friday night?

JOHN.



WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS

"HE is a clever writer, but he has much to learn."
"Yes?"

"I told him that everybody was talking about his latest book, and he was foolish enough to ask what it is they are saying."



PLATONIC love is a good deal like the gun we didn't know was loaded.

THE CARAVAN

By Clinton Scollard

FROM underneath the carob shade,
A wavering line of gray and white,
I watch it lose its form and fade
Like dreams across the face of night.

Whither it goes I can but guess,
Haply where ruined Tadmor stands,
The voiceless haunt of loneliness,
Amid the desert's swirling sands;

Or toward the Tigris' tawny tide
Into that land of ancient thrift
Where Bagdad's rich bazaars spread wide,
And Haroun's minarets uplift;

Or toward the swart Arabian skies,
The home of sempiternal calms,
Where pilgrims seek their paradise
Through Mecca girdled with its palms.

Yet howsoe'er it fares, I fare,
In buoyant spirit I am one
With those that drink the untrammelled air,
The nomad children of the sun.

From camel-back I scan the waste
A fair oasis sign to find,
And stranger to all thoughts of haste
Let my kaffeyeh take the wind.

Sandaled with silence, on I press,
Rousing before the flower of morn,
Through spaces where forgetfulness
Seems to have dwelt since time was born.

And when, with soothing touch, comes night
After the round of jars and joys,
Above the head, in Allah's sight,
The hosts of heaven wheel and poise.

Throughout the strangely tranquil days
I join in prayer and fast and feast,
Looking on life with long, slow gaze
As does the fatalistic East.

And then—and then—the goal!—Ah, me!
At last, wherever rangeth man,
How well we know that there must be
One bourn for every caravan!

THE CELESTIAL SCHOOLMASTER

By Marguerite Tracy

ANGELICA MILHAU says that there are periods in our lives when the celestial bodies discipline us, just as there are other periods when we receive their most favorable influences.

She says that it is possible to mitigate their evil tendencies, but that one cannot wholly change things. Whatever is prognosticated will take place, but as fatality works more on the material than on either the mental or spiritual plane, one's behavior under the given condition really determines its effect on one's destiny. In other words, "Character is Destiny."

I shall tell of the circumstances which took place at Hitherbrook, where I live with my sister Nannie and her husband and their little boy, and leave you to decide whether we, any of us, could have mitigated them. My sister's husband did most, I think; but as Miss Milhau says, he had already been disciplined—that is, he had had similar aspects in 1898, when he was captain of volunteers in the war with Spain. At that time Miss Milhau saw that the evil planet Saturn was in the house of Scorpio, and Mars was rising.

Our house had been full of company, and we had had such unsettled weather as to be compelled to devise indoor amusements, and we had gone in for the occult.

We had a Swami from the city for an evening, and we all dressed against the weather somewhat as the Japanese Samurai used to dress for battle. But we did not win, and the occult was about to resolve into vaudeville when Bernard-Less routed everybody by a sudden and imperative demonstration of his vermiform appendix.

The guests went off at once in an eruption of luggage, and the train that took them back to town passed the train that brought the surgeons and the peace and orderliness of ether and iodoform.

The only guest who did not leave was Stanley Shott. He had come when there was no place to sleep in but Bernie's Indian tent, and he said he certainly wouldn't leave now, when there was suddenly plenty of room and when the presence and authority of trained nurses in the house would make it necessary for him to exercise a hypnotic influence he boasted of over the cook.

So Stanley stayed, and was such a comfort that after the operation Nannie kissed him, while Bernard had his arm around her and the two men were shaking hands.

It is no use looking ahead to see whether I married Stanley Shott. The things I am going to tell of really happened. And as Miss Milhau explained, when she cast my horoscope, Saturn, the disciplinarian, was unfriendly to the fair goddess Venus when I was born, and this brings about many disappointments in love and frequently retards marriage until after the age of twenty-eight or thirty—I am just out of Smith College.

We were sitting out on the pergola having tea, when the discussion started. Bernie, in all the distinction of convalescence, was among us, stretched on a steamer-chair.

I would like to make a picture of us all as we sat there, because it seems that after that evening we were never quite the same. You will see, as you read on, how it all happened.

We sat in the hammock, in the grass,

on chairs and lounges, bathed in the sunset. We could see a fleet of mosquito boats becalmed in the inlet at the foot of the lawn. The pergola was on quite high ground, connected with the house by a long arbor covered with grape-vines, and lined with old-fashioned flower borders. The house stood at the edge of a bit of woodland, a big wooden house, of rather severe Colonial design—a house to live in all the year round.

"Mother, couldn't I have dessert, if I had it now, before tea —"

"Mother's reading, darling."

Bernard had been reading, too, but he laid down his letters to enter into a perfectly reasonable argument, with Bernie. They were well along, and I was mentally sure of Bernie winning out, when his mother interrupted them with a pent-up exclamation which had doubtless been waxing as she read.

"Bernard!" she cried. "What shall I do about Angelica Milhau? She wants to come."

The little court of appeal suspended session. How often had I seen it happen just like this—Bernie, on the point of success, defeated at the moment of fulfilment after all his trouble. His face became gravely reproving. "I was speaking, mother," he said.

"Venus de Praxiteles Milo?" asked Stanley Shott. "Tell her to bring her arms. Can't have a girl here without arms. Impossible."

"Not at all like the Milo," Bernard said to him. "More like the MacMonnies Bacchante. I don't mind what she brings, Nannie, provided she doesn't bring her shell."

"A Botticelli," said Stanley—"or does she go in for rowing?"

"She sounds like a snail," said Bernie.

Stanley made a gesture of protest. "Don't say snail, Bernie. Sounds gooeey and is unflattering."

"Then a turtle," Bernie suggested. "Only a turtle doesn't come all out."

"Angelica herself is good fun," said Bernard. "But she carries a house around with her. When she went to Edgemont, she took her house and

clapped it down in the exact middle of Reggie's quarter-mile course, and frightened the horses nearly to death. If she brings it here, she'll want to set it up on the tennis-court; either that or the target-range. Of course if she doesn't want to bring her house, I don't care."

Bernie now spoke up. "I want to see the house, father. While I'm sick and can't have dessert, couldn't she bring the house? Just while I'm sick?"

And they went at it again.

"Hush!" cried Nannie. "Hush, both of you! Bernie, my love, mother is going to *read you the letter*. Bernard, do let the child listen. You can settle about dessert after we settle about Angelica."

We all arranged ourselves in those attitudes which are assumed to indicate attention, and she read:

"As Saturn is in the sign of Scorpio, and the erratic planet Herschel is rising, you are certainly under conditions the greater part of this month and next month when you might not only be stirred up by an illness, but in fact almost anything might overtake you. That is one great reason why I am anxious to be with you, to give you the benefit of my favorable influences. My own indications forecast a great piece of good fortune that is to come from very unexpected sources. So much depends upon those with whom we are associated at all times, that it is even more necessary for you than usual to surround yourselves with harmonious and fortunate influences. If there is anyone in your house, in any capacity, born about February seventeenth, it is your duty to get them away, at least for the present—"

Nannie looked up. As she had already read all this over to herself, she was a bit surprised at our faces. We must have looked what we felt, for she laid the letter down a moment.

"Angelica is different," she admitted. "This astrology is something that she's picked up. She didn't have it last year."

"Bernard," said Stanley, "were you

born about February seventeenth? Because if you were, you've got to get out. *I'm in March.*"

We subsequently discovered that none of the family was in danger of expulsion, except the puppies, and they weren't in the house.

Bernard was looking at the boy with a peculiar tenderness. "We have *had* the unexpected illness," he said.

Nannie's eyes met his. A wave of passionate love engulfed the steamer chair.

Stanley Shott looked at me drolly, and knocked on wood.

"And we *will* have her, mother, with the house," said Bernie, the moment he was released.

"Dear love, of course we will. Mother is going to write her right away."

"Not on the tennis-court," warned Bernard. "Really, Nannie, you'd better have her out of the house. She can have my study. But don't let her spoil our tennis for the rest of the summer."

"But, father, if I can't have dessert, mother said —"

It looked as if the whole question would be opened again for a fresh hearing; but Bernie was so tired, the excitement of the letter had exhausted him so, that he began to cry. And at the first quiver, the house of Rogers capitulated and the house of Milhau rose—or was invited to rise on any site whatever that suited it. Nannie wrote the letter. Then realizing that the letter could not be despatched before the morning post, Bernard telephoned a wire. Then, finding that verbal communication could be effected, he got Angelica at the telephone, and she talked to all of us. Before Bernie closed his eyes, he had the assurance that the house was all ready to be shipped and that both it and Miss Milhau would arrive on the morrow. She said that she had had a presentiment that we would want her right away.

But I know, and you know, too, that the real reason of her coming was because Bernie wasn't well enough to have dessert.

II

THE chalet was set up on the tennis-court.

It took a week to set it up, with Bernard and Stanley working at it all day long, and the men on the place helping as much as they could be spared.

Meanwhile Angelica Milhau was so lovely to all of us that we all loved her. She was dark like a gipsy and thin, and brimming over with a certain irresistible grace of personality. Her eyes were the most beautiful I have ever seen. They were very large, very lustrous and fringed with extraordinarily long lashes. When she smiled at you, she smiled not only with her lips, but with her eyes, gathering them all up into fine lines of merriment and tenderness, a way she had retained from babyhood. I felt heavy and too solid beside her, but it was a great comfort to be told by anyone so fascinating that I looked like Brunhilde—that was what she called me, when she asked me to drop the Miss Milhau and call her Angelica.

Bernard had Bernie's Indian tent moved so that it commanded the court. In a few days most of the pergola furniture found its way to the tent, where a couple of showers toned it, and then Bernard had an ice-chest put in, because the court was some distance from the house and it was impossible to keep the maids running out all day. One of the card-tables was placed out there, and a blue-print which they consulted frequently was tacked to it.

The print was numbered like the pieces of the *châlet*. The numbers showed where each section belonged. There were ninety-six pieces, and some of them were so cunningly devised that they answered two purposes at once. That was what made it so intricate.

Bernard and Stanley got so interested after the first day that their talk sounded like football signals. Sometimes they would pull their chairs up to the card-table, and almost wear the blue-print out, figuring on their cuffs

so they would remember the combinations when they went back to work.

Bernie enjoyed it so much that Bernard got out his own army tent and set it up so that Bernie could lie under it on a camp-bed and watch the building. There was no one left in the house but Nannie and me, and Nannie was out a good deal to look after Bernie, and of course we had tea out there.

On the last evening before the chalet was finished, we had an elaborate dinner. No one was asked except Wally Hackstaff, who is our nearest neighbor, and as Wally is over most of the time, and only just out of college, he couldn't have been said to add formality to the occasion.

We wore our finest frocks, Angelica dressed my hair, and Nannie lent me her crescent to put in it. But I had Angelica try the crescent in her hair, and it looked so much as if it had been meant for her that I made her wear it.

It was a very lively dinner, and afterward Nannie played some two-steps for us. Then Bernard turned on the electric music and we all danced to that.

Stanley danced with me. I had to tell him to go ask Angelica to dance. I don't think I ever was so happy as at that moment, with the little acknowledged feeling of proprietorship. He asked her and she danced with him a little, but they soon tired of it and sat on the stairs and watched us—and I can see now that this, too, flattered me, little idiot that I was.

Then Angelica read our hands and told us all sorts of nonsense to make us laugh.

Suddenly she and Nannie went upstairs very mysteriously on an errand. We could hear them going off into hysterics of laughter.

"Don't you think Angelica's good fun?" Bernard asked Stanley.

"Oh," he said, "corking. I see now what you meant about the Bacchante. She's a pocket edition. I wonder why she wouldn't cast my horoscope?"

"Your past, probably."

"Nothing to prevent her confining herself to the future."

"How do you know?" he said.

They sent me into the drawing-room to play some Grieg for them. I went, and I tried, but I couldn't.

Just then Nannie came down the stairs with a guitar. She had dressed herself as a Caballero. She wore a sombrero with a silver cord and was cloaked in a Mexican serape. She had on her riding boots with Bernard's spurs to them, and I suspected that the blanket covered Bernard's riding-breeches. She had tied the guitar up in ribbons. As she came downstairs, she looked as if Velasquez had painted her.

We clapped our hands until the piano strings vibrated.

When Nannie got to the foot of the stairs, Angelica, who had come down the back stairway, came dancing into the midst of us with a tambourine.

Nannie did little more than keep the time for her. She danced, and as each figure merged into another and the music grew faster, Bernard put back the lounge and the chairs. Still, she danced. Her face was dark, even somber, until she smiled. Then it lighted with a radiance that seemed as if it had been coming up through the shining floor, through her little high-heeled shoes, her glowing silk skirt and Spanish lace, and her delicate throat. Her motions were like flames. She danced from toes to finger-tips.

Her dancing, so joyous in itself, made me unhappy.

Stanley sat where I could see his profile. It was a glimpse of him, as his eyes followed her, that hurt me so. He was flushed as I had never seen him. After that, as I watched her, I saw her through his eyes. Something physical that it seemed to me she laid bare, tortured and embarrassed me, while it made my heart leap.

Her body was as expressive as her face or hands. She was full of poignant gestures that shaded from archness to languor, from passion to shrugs—to twinkling fingers and arms akimbo. Her ankles gleamed with a

gold bangle. She smiled again, gave a shake of her lace and silk petticoat, the twist of a serpent, and came straight at us. When she was almost within arm's length, she stopped, swept the floor with a gesture of the tambourine, kissed both her hands to us, and vanished up the stairs.

Even when we all said good-night to him, Stanley still sat like a man in a dream, and when I looked over the balcony, he had dropped his face in his hands.

III

I THREW myself upon my bed without undressing. For hours and hours, it seemed to me, I held my head in my hands, in the pillows, feeling the utter despair of matching against the passion of her dancing my clumsy youth. I had no eyes like hers, no trained powers; she had resources of which I did not know the very existence—and Stanley had answered their challenge. He had never looked at me as he had looked at her—I was only a child to him.

I sobbed into the pillow, but no tears came.

It was not fair—my heart cried it over and over. I did not want the look he had given to Angelica. I only wanted him as I knew him, tender and merry and my very own. I hated the look he had given to Angelica—men did not look like that at women they honored. And yet—if there was no danger, why did I suffer so?

After a while I slipped to the floor beside my bed, gripping the bed covers. The terrible new pain was killing me—it would be so much easier to do it quickly, one's self—and end the suffering.

And Stanley was there, so close to me, Stanley with all his power of making me happy. Though he had never touched me, I hungered for the shelter of his arms.

I sounded my repeater and found that it was three o'clock and a quarter. From my east window I could see the

trees tossing. The sky was thick and it was very dark. I stood for a while looking out, and I fancied I made out a little moving figure, queerly laden, descending toward the tennis-court. It was so far away, and the night was so covered, that it might have been a bush swaying. I did not see it again distinctly, and presently I crept into bed.

Lying there, I heard someone move quietly along the hall, as if Nannie were making one of her pilgrimages to the nursery. But she seemed to go down the back stairs. I heard the steps creak and the stair door shut itself. Then I must have drowsed off, for the next thing I knew Bernard was rousing me.

"Go down to the tennis-court," he said quickly. "The woods are on fire and the roof is catching."

I heard him go in to wake Stanley and then rush down the hall to the servants' wing.

I tried to turn on the light. It was not working. As I went out, I saw Stanley fumbling at the automatic fire-hose in the hall. A crash sounded at the back of the house and the smoke came pouring in. A part of the roof had fallen.

I felt too bewildered to stir. Just then Bernard came back. "Get yourselves out," he called. "Don't try to save anything. The house is gone."

"Are Nannie and Bernie safe?"

He turned and looked at me. In the dim light I saw him pass his hand over his forehead. "Nannie and Bernard—everybody is out," he said.

Stanley had already gone. I heard him calling Angelica. I hurried slowly through the rooms, wondering what I might save. Then I thought of Bernie's toys. Sure that no one else had stopped for them, I went up to the attic where a playroom had been elaborately furnished for him, and rapidly filled a sheet with them. This parcel I carried to the window, and with difficulty threw it out.

The lawn in front of the house was as bright as day. It fascinated me, and I opened the window. As I did so, the roar of the flames sounded like a torrent. The wind was carrying large

sparks of fire overhead. The brilliance was so appalling that, though it was all behind me and I saw only the light over the lawn, I felt suddenly afraid and stood motionless.

A group of servants caught sight of me. The wind and the fire carried off the sound of their voices, but they waved their arms. I looked back into the playroom. It had grown very hot. A partition fell and the smoke rolled in.

In one corner of the playroom was the fire-hose. Yard by yard I pulled it out and let it drop from the window. Below they were holding a blanket like a safety-net. As I looked down, the blanket seemed very small and as if I might miss it.

Then I crawled over the ledge of the window and let myself down by the hose. Slipping faster and faster, with a great wrench that seemed to pull out my arms, I lost my hold and tumbled into the blanket.

It was Bernard who picked me up.

"Is Stanley safe?" I remember asking.

"Right here," said Stanley.

Then I fainted.

When I awoke, it was broad daylight. I was in a new room. My arms were very sore. Going to the window, I looked out.

In a clearing of charcoal and burned timber lay the ruins. We were occupying the chalet.

"Speak softly," said Nannie, coming forward and kissing me. "Bernie hasn't awaked. Isn't is wonderful? Angelica carried him out here before anything happened. She had a pre-sentiment."

I remembered how I had seen what seemed like a moving figure toiling toward the tennis-court.

"She got you and Bernie mixed up," explained Bernard. "The real danger, it seems, was for you. She considers it very remarkable that you came off so easily, seeing that she gave her entire attention to Bernie."

"Bernard," said Nannie, "I want you to take up astrology. I would do it, but I'm such a poor hand at calculations."

"Astrology!" said Bernard. "I'm going to sue the fire extinguisher company."

At this moment Angelica and Stanley came down the lawn. They had found a toy automobile, all that was left of the pack I had thrown out of the window. It was a blackened and sinister little car, and had scorched the hand with which Stanley had picked it up.

Angelica's frock was torn and wet all about her feet from the dew. Her hair was down. She looked ghastly tired. Her thin, brown face was all hollow and all eyes. And yet she looked radiantly happy.

Stanley had a pale blue bath-robe over his pajamas. It seemed that he had saved nothing of his own. Yet he, too, looked radiantly happy.

They carried the charred remains of a leaflet which I recognized as one of Angelica's astrological calendars, and as they came down they explained to us that they had been consulting it.

The evil planet Saturn, they said, was passing into the altogether humanitarian house of Aquarius, and Venus was rising.

"And will that help us?" asked Nannie, with her candid mother eyes on Stanley, "to keep the cook?"

We breakfasted on the unfinished doorstep of the chalet, from an automobile hamper sent over by our neighbors. A little later, we decided to camp on the rifle-range, to be near the chalet.

Bernard brought from the city a cook's tent, and a mess-tent, and fly-tents for all of us; ordered pipes which connected us in a couple of days with the house plumbing, and provisioned us with tinned army goods and powdered milk as if we were an expedition to the Pole. Next day we were connected with the rest of the world, at the chalet, by telephone. The idea of leaving the place had not even been entertained.

Bernie was in his heaven. He had taken so much interest in the putting up of the chalet that waking up in it, with all his things about him, seemed like the doings of the fairies. He returned thanks gravely.

Dozens of plans for the new house

were daily unrolled on the card-table and discussed when we all met, usually at tea-time.

It was tea-time now, and sunset. The company-street, as Bernard called the rifle-range, was partly in shadow, and the tent-flies were tinted pink, nestling against the green of the terrace.

Angelica was busy with the automobile tea-basket. Nannie and I were sewing, and Stanley, who had been raking in the ruins in the place where Angelica's room had been, was turning over in his hand a couple of blackened rings in which all the stones were uninjured except one large opal, which had cracked.

"Glad that's gone," he said reflectively. "No use for opals."

Bernard, at the card-table, had been figuring on the margin of a blue-print.

"If we build and inhabit this house, Nannie," he said, tapping the blue-print with a patient and logical pencil, "it means that every first of June we shall have spent our income for the entire year, and shall have nothing to live on from June first till the next first of January."

Bernie pricked up his ears. But he got no light on the problems of parental inconsistency, though after a long, thoughtful silence, Nannie said: "Oh, Bernard, we *could* have economized all those tents and things. Why *did* you buy them?"

It was a critical moment. But after the first startled and puzzled look, Bernard burst out laughing.

"Haven't I told you," he said at last, "how I hit on this idea of going into camp?"

None of us knew. I doubt if anyone, unless perhaps Stanley, had any idea that anything had been thought out at all.

Bernard got up and poured his own tea, and creamed and triple-sugared it. Not even Angelica could apportion tea to suit him. He sat down in one of the pergola chairs and stirred the mixture in his cup.

"When I awoke," he said, "the house was already burning. I tried the automatic extinguishers and realized that

we would all be burned alive before I could get them to working. After that, all I thought of was getting everybody out. First, I went to Bernie's nursery. It was empty. Even the furniture was gone." He looked after Angelica as she carried a second cup of tea to the recumbent Stanley. "It seemed then like a miracle. I didn't stop to understand it. I simply thanked God. Then I went in and told Nannie. I remembered this chalet and told her to come here. Then I went to wake Angelica and you, Julia, and then I went after the servants. They were so excited I couldn't count them. I nearly went crazy.

"After that I can't remember distinctly. I remember Julia at the play-room window, and catching her in the blanket, and coming down here with her. But when I found Bernie sound asleep in his own bed, with all his best beloved things around him, I believe I went out and lay down on the grass on the rifle-range there and cried.

"I don't know how long I lay there. The stars and the heat somehow reminded me of a night at Chickamauga, when I had gone out because I couldn't sleep. The men were all sick."

Stanley nodded.

"I got to thinking about the army, and the responsibility I had then. I wanted to get away from the shock of the fire, so that I could think what was best for us to do. And suddenly I realized how good it would be for Bernie if we just stayed here and lived out-of-doors with him. Then I began planning a camp, and all at once I remembered that I could go down to the Quartermaster's office and fit us all out, on credit, from the Government."

Stanley sat up. "What!" he said. "Have they paid you?"

"The Department at Washington," said Bernard, smiling, "has just recently authorized the Quartermaster's Department in New York to pay me for twelve hundred blouses and twelve hundred sombreros that I paid for in eighteen-ninety-eight."

"Eighteen-ninety-eight," said Angelica. "You had Saturn in a similar as-

pect then, with Mars instead of Herschel."

Bernard made a gesture which took in the little encampment of which he was so proud. "It's an honest soul, the Government," he said, "but slow pay. So you see, Nannie, I *was* economizing."

Angelica was listening to him with a certain deep look she has. "And you lay there in the grass and planned all that out?" she said.

Bernard returned the look. "It was not I," he said, "who saved Bernie."

That evening after dinner Angelica cast my horoscope and explained about Saturn, the great planetary disciplinarian, sometimes called "the Celestial Schoolmaster." She told me that in 1914 I should be receiving the friendliest influence from Venus, and that from that time on Saturn would pass out of my life for many years. She said I was to be as philosophical as possible and try to realize that I have harmonious conditions to which to look forward.

Stanley went into town next morning to do some errands.

When he came back he had lots of things for us. A big box from a

famous confectioner was coming by express for me.

He brought back one of Angelica's rings. He had had the opal replaced by a diamond. They were engaged.

As I said, this is a story of what really happened, and not constructed in any way.

We had a party that evening in honor of the engagement. Bernie was still too weak to sit at the table; but as we were starting to the mess-tent, where the candles were twinkling over the flowers that covered the dinner cloth, he called after us.

"Father," he said, "now that Saturn is in the sign of Aquarius, mayn't I please have dessert?"

Angelica and Stanley have been married since all this happened, and Nannie and Bernard inhabit the new house that Bernard said they couldn't, on their income.

Sometimes, when it seems especially lonely, and 1914 seems uncommonly far off, I wonder if character really does rule destiny, and if it does, why I am not more philosophical and more able to mitigate the discipline of the Celestial Schoolmaster.

I wonder if Angelica really read my horoscope, or if she saw that I cared.



TO FRANCIS THOMSON

By Thomas Walsh

AS lightning o'er some village feast of lamps,
Thy spirit flashed athwart these little times
Of babbling sages and ear-cozening rhymes.
The storm comes on! Lo, a new pallor stamps
The brows that with thee held the high-pitched camps
Of beauty 'gainst the hordes from out the slimes
Of greed and hate who clutch the heaven-set chimes,
To drag them jangling down the fens and damp.

Now thou art gone—"thy stammer of the skies"
Resolved in ultimate song. The white gleam lies
Along the dismal streets thy feet have passed,
And shame burns hot on cheeks thou erst found cold.
Thy giant soul hath Pindar claimed at last;
Thee to his breast Assisi's son doth fold.

PRESENCE OF MIND

By Harry Graham

AT a moment of stress or of crisis,
When troubles encompass mankind,
The behavior most tactful and wise is
The product of Presence of Mind;
And although we can hardly be taught to
Be vigilant, ready or brave,
We may all of us learn how we *ought* to
Behave.

If your yacht is a wreck on the ocean,
Showing no inclination to float,
While your messmates give way to emotion
You should lower the bulkiest boat.
Don't delay to shake hands with your dearest—
(Your actions they won't understand),
But proceed with all haste to the nearest
Dry land.

When at length on the shore you are driven,
To the person who first comes in view
You should state what reward will be given
If he rescues your cargo and crew.
Should a coastguard be present, invite him
To swim with a rope to the wreck,
While you sit on the jetty and write him
A cheque.

If your house is in flames when you waken,
Though its inmates you fail to arouse,
Some precautions at least should be taken
To report the event to your spouse.
This a privilege due to a wife is,
And your judgment should not be obscured
By the comforting thought that her life is
Insured.

If the ladder on which you are standing
Collapses while you're up aloft,
You should always make certain of landing
On something that's suitably soft;
Like my lunatic brother at Brighton,
Who tumbles each night out of bed,
But adroitly contrives to alight on
His head.

If your bulldog lays hold of a stranger,
 You should turn the thing off with a laugh,
 Saying "Nonsense! Your leg's in no danger!
 For my *bull* is quite *cowed* by your *calf*!"
 (Should the victim reply to you thickly,
 Or to water be vainly decoyed,
 Then both he and the dog should be quickly
 Destroyed.)

If your motor runs over some chickens,
 And the villagers gather in groups,
 You should ask them at once why the dickens
 Those damp things aren't kept in their coops.
 If the owner arrives at this juncture,
 You must simulate virtuous ire,
 And accuse him of trying to puncture
 Your tire.

If you're ever attacked by a lion,
 A camel, a bull or a bear,
 Keep a human and resolute eye on
 The beast, till he slinks to his lair.
 (If this "Power of the Eye" that we read of
 Is as absent as hair from an egg,
 You can always fall back on the Speed of
 The Leg.)

Last of all, if a humorous poet
 Should award you the fruits of his Muse,—
 You will never peruse them, you know it,
 But you haven't the heart to refuse—
 So remark, as their charms he rehearses,
 How a merciful Fate you would thank
 If his pages, as well as his verses,
 Were blank!



DEVOTION

By Archibald Sullivan

HE saw Love gently take her by the hand,
 And Beauty leaning down to kiss her face,
 But she sought not his eyes, for loud and clear
 Youth piped her onward to Life's feasting-place.

He saw Love leave her at the gate of tears,
 And Beauty hide between the sunset skies;
 But as she turned, a beggar from Life's feast,
 She found her heaven waiting in his eyes.

ONE SATURDAY IN AUGUST

By Vanderheyden Fyles

“WELL, I certainly can't make it the telephone,” retorted Ethel in a tone of finality, as she jabbed her needle decisively into the dainty gown on which she was sewing busily.

“That is what you have answered to every suggestion I've made,” replied the young man sitting on the window-ledge, after pausing idly to blow a breath of air down the soft shirt that clung close to his athletic form in the heat of the August afternoon. “You seem to have the pleasant idea that economy is a matter of giving up the kinds of fruit you never eat or the places you never were asked to go.”

“Nothing of the sort, Midland Aines. I should think I had a pretty definite idea what economy was by this time. But you suggest such impossible things. Get rid of my kitty, indeed! And what would I care about a roof over me if Pupsie wasn't under it, too? As for the particular kind of roof, you know as well as I that a girl living alone hasn't much choice in this silly, gossipy New York. And as for cutting down for the little difference that a horrid, smelly boarding-house would make, you're well enough aware that this tiny flat, way up here, doesn't come to much more—counting the nights I overeat dining out, or eat nothing at home.”

“Still, a telephone isn't very nutritious. And it hardly can be accepted as a guarantee of respectability, either,” the boy put in; but with such a fresh, genial young laugh that the spirit of the jibe could not be doubted.

While the girl's nimble fingers were busy with her sewing, he turned his idle hands to forming an awkwardly large

fan from a two-days-old newspaper, and then fanning himself in a way that sent all the air toward Ethel. That is, it would have if there had been any air to send. But it was an afternoon in August when the heat of the scorching sun was reflected back from the steaming tin roofs and parched sidewalks and melting asphalt roadways of the deserted city. Whether either of the young folk thought of it that way, the heaviness of the sweltering air made even the desultory conversation they had been carrying on seem too great an exertion. Aines clambered lazily down from the window-sill and strolled to the kitchen. When he came back he carried a bucket of water. This he threw over the tin roof that came almost up to the two windows of the room. Having repeated the operation, he deposited the bucket again in the kitchen, the while, in tones of playful severity, explaining to the cat, who was lord of that realm, that if he drank the single bowlful of milk that remained he would suffer acutely before the milkman's whistle up the dumbwaiter announced that more and the next morning had arrived.

Although her words picked up the conversation where it had wilted away, the youth had, as a matter of fact, been some time back on his perch in the window.

“The telephone rent does seem extravagant when the bills come in, I know,” she said; “but I must have a little fun, even if I am New England all through and from way back. And you know what men are—at least, the kind who ask me to pleasant evenings of dinner and the theatre and that sort

of thing. They get the idea and then they get me; but it is a case of that moment or never."

"I think you might find a little less sordid way of putting it," young Aines put in.

"That's not sordid, Mid. You and I came from the same long line of Down Easters who have been practical and calling things by their right names for hundreds of years. And considering that we grew up no farther apart than the two sides of the common, I certainly think we can talk things over with each other without frills and 'excuse me's.' I had my ambitious ideals; and I have them yet. Only I've found that 'arriving' as an artist isn't a matter of wishing to, or of keeping my mind and eyes on only the high places and living in an 'atmosphere.' But it is working hard, and getting along just as cheaply and decently as I can; and doing that by drawing horrid fashion pictures for horrid newspapers—when I am lucky enough to get the orders!"

"Granted all this, Ethel," Midland retorted. "Remember it was you who started the subject of cutting down."

"I know," she answered, laying aside the waist of the gown, and beginning to rip a ruffle of handsome lace from the skirt. "When it nears September, each year, I feel that something must be done—a starting-a-fresh-page-of-life idea. I hoped this time that the Harland firm would give me a chance to illustrate that— There; isn't that the postman now?" she interrupted herself.

"No; it is Mrs. Finch's parrot. The beast of a bird has acquired the art of whistling like a postman—especially when one is anxious," Aines replied.

"Where is our self-appointed chap-eron, by the way?" Ethel asked.

"Gone to Asbury Park for over Sunday. Didn't she wither you with the splendor of it? She assured me that 'really swell people' go away only for week-ends, nowadays."

"No," Ethel laughed. "I pretend to sleep very late, and she does not come down here mornings any more."

"That's where you gain by living under her. My flat being over, she

hears me when I get out of bed; and before I'm dry from my bath she is at the dumbwaiter, calling up the latest social items from her morning paper. Since she discovered that the Waynes and that lot are your cousins, she has given me no peace with details of their comings and goings and house-parties and things.

"It is a Mrs. Finch question, I know," Aines went on, after a pause; "but why don't you visit the Waynes any more?"

"What should I do among people of that sort?"

"You'd be the bulliest girl in the household, for one thing," was the answer. "And, what is more to the point, you might get a corking opening of some sort. There's pull in every line of work."

"I don't want to get ahead that way," she retorted.

"Pride!"

"Not at all. If I were so overwhelmingly proud, would I be altering for tonight a cast-off gown of Gwen Wayne's—and glad to get it?"

"Pretty new and gorgeous cast-off, isn't it?" commented Midland, running his fingers through a flounce of lace.

"Much too rich," she answered; "and, like all the evening gowns she gives me, it can't have been worn more than two or three times. It is all very well for Gwen to be swathed in lace of that sort, but a pretty picture I would make coming out of this two-by-six flat in it. Then people could talk."

Her tone was bantering, but Aines swung down from the ledge with a violent jerk. He paced up and down the room, pausing now and then to kick at a door-jamb in impotent annoyance.

"Isn't it rotten, Ethel," he said, at last; "isn't it rotten to have every little thing you do talked over and mauled over? Why couldn't you—and I, too—have had the nature that would have been content to stay down in that Connecticut town where folk knew our fathers and grandfathers and all the worthy old stick-in-the-muds who came before, and accepted us as all right, unless we showed ourselves not to be?"

"All right until father's death left me alone and without a cent of money to continue to live in our house," was the retort. "I quite properly could have starved there as long as I kept the house. But, horrors, to sell the home of my ancestors!"

"Well, we've kept ours. And what is the result? Mother alone there, while I grub down here to keep it for her." Then, after a pause, he went on in a tone of half-humorous petulance: "And I may as well tell you, by the way, that we can go no farther into the country tomorrow than one fare on the subway will take us. I was afraid if I kept it I would dip into it, so I sent all the money I had to mother this morning for her mortgage fund."

Ethel paused again, in an attitude of listening.

"No; it is not the postman," Midland said. "Besides, old Stevenson is just as likely to have forgotten all about writing when the first breeze of the Atlantic Highlands struck him. If I had promised to let an employee know whether he could have the bigger job, I likely would forget to confirm it if I got one breath of fresh air after this stifling, glaring, deserted city!"

"Mid, Mid, all that is peevish. And it's not like you, either," Ethel remonstrated, as she rose and moved toward a mirror, holding the much dismantled but still very pretty gown against her form.

"Well," he blurted out, "do you think New York on a Saturday afternoon in August is like itself—or like anything north of a depopulated Hades?"

Ethel had started about the room, apparently searching for something, but she stopped, as though the heat made movement impossible. She lifted a hand-mirror and placed the cool silver back against her forehead. Then, in a moment, she resumed her search.

"I am going to do my nails for to-night, now," she said; "and then you will have to go. But I may have to ask you to come back to hook my dress. With Mrs. Finch away, I don't think

there is a soul in the house to help me except the janitress, and she might soil my gown—and my imagination, too. When I am going for an evening with Carter I like to forget all these horrid makeshifts."

"What is it to be this time?"

"Just dinner, I think," she replied. "I've seen the only play in town five times. And I don't think much of a woman going to a roof-garden alone with a man."

"I've known you to go to them with me," Midland laughed.

"Well, since you insist on my saying it, with a man as well known in New York as Carter Livingston." She continued her search, looking into vases and under the clock, running through drawers and shaking out the leaves of books.

"What on earth are you looking for?" Aines asked.

"Last time a cheque for more than five dollars came in I hid a one-dollar bill so as to be pleasantly surprised when I found it—just some such time as this," she answered. "The only hitch in the affable arrangement is that I cannot, for the life of me, recall where I hid it. Never mind, though," she said, presently, sitting by a table near one of the windows. "I needed some stuff for my nails, but I can manage with what I have; and I can make my emergency dime do for the maid in the dressing-room, after dinner." She worked quietly over her fingers, occasionally stopping to push back the damp hair from her white forehead and delicately pretty face. For some time there was silence except for the shrieks and whistles of the parrot in the window above, and the distant cries of the children playing in the hot streets below. Finally Aines spoke.

"Look here, Ethel," he said; "there isn't any reason why I ever should ask intimate questions. But we always have been frank with each other. There isn't much about that girl down home and the way I feel about her that I haven't told you. Heaven knows, you've shamed Patience on a monument the way you've sat out on that

tin roof there night after night through this endless summer and listened to my love-sick maunderings. And all this afternoon, for instance, you've heard more imaginary postmen than I, just because you realize that when I get that bigger job I won't have to wait any longer with things unsettled—this sort of near-engagement." She was surprised at the triviality of his words in speaking of a subject that had seemed his most sacred thought.

"Good Lord!" he went on vehemently. "A lifelong friendship is a shallow formality compared to the way folk who fight their way together through the scorching desert of a New York summer come to feel for each other!"

"Quite a speech, Mid," Ethel laughed. And it leads to—?"

"To asking how things stand between you and Carter Livingston?"

Ethel did not answer immediately. Indeed, she did not even start to until she had shaken the filings of her nails out of the window and put away her manicure things. Then she brought pen and ink to the little table and sat down to blacken the worn fingers of the long gloves which she was to wear that evening.

"Well, Mid," she finally said, meditatively, "I don't think things 'stand' any way at all. Your speaking of it reminds me that I never have paused to consider exactly what the situation was. I wonder if, after all, I am not just a drifter. For one thing, I am not really much farther along in my work than four years ago, when I came here full of ambition and determination. I don't mean that I haven't worked, and worked hard; but somehow 'tomorrow' always has seemed time enough for the really big stride forward. And as for Carter, well, we've drifted too. I met him through his sister, you know. She dutifully called on me when I came here first because her father and mine had been friends of some sort, centuries back. And just as dutifully she sends me cards once a year for her more general tea, and just as dutifully I go.

"That has not so much to do with what you asked me, though, has it?" she interposed, as she slipped off the right glove and placed it carefully on the window-sill for the ink to dry. Drawing on the left, to ink its gray finger tips, she went on:

"It has this much to do with it, though. Much as I like Carter, and admire the really worth-while man he is, I can't help but wonder whether this little flat on the wrong side of town, and my living here alone and working—when I can get it!—and dining alone with men at restaurants wouldn't all look a bit different to him if I had not met him at his sister's house."

She pretended not to see the scowl that she caught on Aines's face when she glanced up, but occupied herself placing the second glove beside its mate. She went to the bedroom, returning with two neat, low shoes and a brush.

"Here, don't you do that," blurted out the scowling young man. He seized one of the shoes from her rather roughly, and brought it to a polish with vicious rubs.

When she returned again to her seat by the window she brought a large, black hat and a new half-yard of tulle to freshen it in whichever of the several places needed it most.

"Mid," she went on, "there is a type of woman in New York that I don't believe you know much about. I am sure she does not exist out of this great, feverish cosmopolis; and I doubt if she would be understood elsewhere. I thought at first that my position was unique; but after all I am only an example of a vast class. We are the most peculiarly detached women in the world. We have many men friends, and few, if any, of our own sex. That, I suppose, is because most whom we easily could know aren't worth while; and the others whom we meet occasionally have established duties and pleasures and associations, a complete structure, of one grade or another, of family and social environment. And so, except for a few times in the Winter seasons when we go, as strangers in a throng, to their

larger parties, we spend our quiet days in work, if that is necessary, or in reading and walking and other solitary diversions. But in the evenings we sweep radiantly into the luxury and glitter of the better restaurants and the theatres."

"Here, Ethel," Midland interrupted, shoving a shoe toward her, "give me that other slipper—and then, if you please, shut up! What you are saying isn't nice to hear, and it isn't true."

"It is true, Mid," she answered, handing him the slipper and then holding the hat at arm's length to get the effect of the freshened trimming. "And if you think there is anything 'not nice' about it, you simply have failed to understand me. I am not talking of the outwardly similar class—women who aren't straight; nor do I mean even those whose morals are good enough, but who dine with the husbands of women they do not know. But I mean girls like me, who have drifted into it for one reason or another—there are so many different streams that carry one to that same vast ocean! And we lazily float there, principally, I suppose, because we are good enough not to be satisfied with people of coarser grain than the men we know there; and because we are too good to trick these men—even to lead them unconsciously, I mean—into marriage."

Aines slammed the second shoe on the window-sill at his side of the room.

"Now, look here," he said. "Unconsciously I led the conversation toward this, so I suppose I can't kick. But I don't like it. Do you suppose I am going to sit about and hear you intimating that Carter Livingston, just because he is who he is—and I have every respect for a man who has achieved the things he has even if he did have a lot of family boost to start with—but do you suppose I am going to let you suggest that he thinks of you differently from any other girl he meets at his sister's?"

"He treats me much better," she laughed from the kitchen, whence she emerged, presently, bearing a bowl of

steaming water. "He doesn't ask them to the theatre on an average of once a week, and—oh, every third or fourth night in the summer-time."

"That's it—the summer-time, when 'his set,' as Mrs. Finch would call them, is out of town!"

"Why, Mid, the summer is our flourishing time," she retorted. If she had not left the room Aines might have hurled at her a retort as heated as himself.

She brought a black feather boa and, holding it over the steaming bowl, began the process of adding to the rather slight curl that remained in it.

"Let all that go," said Midland, with a sweep of an arm that seemed strong enough to annihilate a hundred summer-times. "I told you I was going to ask something intimate, and I am. Has he ever asked you to marry him—or hinted at it?"

"No."

"Well, he certainly hasn't suggested—"

"No, Mid," she replied, giving him a swift, decisive look. Then, more gently, she went on: "You see, you won't understand. We're drifters; I've told you that. I don't know where it will end. I suppose, one evening, over one of those dinners that he knows so well how to order, he will lead up to the fact that he is going to marry—some girl, I imagine, whose name we all have heard and whom Mrs. Finch knows all about. Then he will see that I meet her. Carter wouldn't make a mistake about a thing like that. Then, if she is more or less human, we will call once on each other. After that, they and I will just naturally drift apart."

She shook out the damp ends of the boa and endeavored to bring them to a curl with the broad side of a bread-knife.

"But isn't it horrid, Mid, to think of things like that just ending, falling away to nothing? I don't suppose everyone feels as I do, but I dread things reaching any definite conclusion; even, do you know, when the conclusion is what would be called a happy one."

"There," she interrupted herself, "that surely is the postman."

"Yes," he answered, moving toward the door. "And you want to dress. Your Prince Charming, in a very smart dinner-coat, will drive up presently in his coach and four, only it probably will be a taxicab."

"And if the letter is all right?" Ethel asked in a serious tone, that had much tenderness in it.

"I haven't much doubt about the advance," he replied. "Old Stevenson isn't the sort to have spoken of it unless he already was settled in his mind. I felt so safe that, in my last letter down home, I told her the waiting time probably was over. Said I would telegraph when the letter came."

"And she will reply by telegraph?"

Midland hesitated a moment.

"I expect so," he finally said. "She hasn't answered my letter yet."

Ethel grasped the meaning of his hesitancy; but she did not speak of it. She was thinking of a time when his disappointment had been keen, and she had heard him stumble on the stairs when he came home very late that night. And for many days he had avoided her, and many nights the step that she listened for, sometimes until the gray light of dawn, had sounded unsteady.

"I'll call up the dumbwaiter when I come back to hear her answer," Ethel said, as Midland opened the door to go. "Now, don't forget."

Just a suggestion of a breeze rustled through the trees of Madison Square, and Ethel, sitting at a small table on the terrace of the restaurant across Fifth avenue from the park, lifted her face and turned it to catch a whiff of air. The man opposite could not fail to observe the graceful curve of her bare throat, the delicate prettiness of her features and the soft charm of her hair as it waved slightly in the evening breeze.

"Ah," she sighed, in a tone of pleasant peace, "it seems as though that is the first breath of air I've had since New Year's Day—or Merry Christmas."

They had finished dinner except for Livingston's coffee and cigar. The terrace had thinned out. Only two of the many celebrities whom Ethel had recognized and discussed, in her lively interest in the active world in its varied phases, remained among the scattered groups of lingering diners. One who had not moved on to a roof-garden or the play was the much-heralded American beauty who had returned that morning from London to rehearse for an early autumn comic opera; and she was vivaciously entertaining a circle of men and women with a flow of anecdote that would seem to be more brilliant than the border of electric lights that glittered above her, bedimming the first stars in the clear evening sky beyond. But Ethel was more interested in the other remaining notability, whom Livingston had pointed out to her. She always felt a stimulating interest in studying faces for clues to character and mind, and she found a peculiarly occupying subject in the new president of an involved life insurance company, whose sudden retirement from the Cabinet to accept the more remunerative post had been the latest nine days' sensation. Livingston had added some illuminative "inside stories" to her rather vast though scattered knowledge of the man, gathered from not always reliable newspapers and magazine articles. It was an element of their comradeship that he chatted entertainingly of men and of large affairs, imparting to her, through trivial personalities as well as by means of lucid explanations, an invigorating sense of intimate understanding. And it was as typical of him, she had observed mentally earlier in the evening, that he did not mention the banal follies that were the only distinguishing traits and achievements of a party of his acquaintance, who evidently had motored into town for a midsummer lark. Nor had he, before or after bowing, recognized the fact that Ethel was not acquainted with the women by even mentioning their names.

Neither had spoken for some time. The man was smoking, while Ethel seemed to be drinking in the cooler air.

And both were pleasantly aware of the muffled music of a Puccini opera that floated out through the open windows of the restaurant to the palm-encircled terrace.

Presently Ethel became conscious of being looked at, and glancing up, she was surprised to discover Livingston gazing intently at her.

"Do you know, you are very pretty tonight?" he said. Then, after a pause: "That is a very rude thing to say, of course; and certainly way off the lines of our usual conversations. But I have been thinking all evening of saying something much more unusual. We might call that a sort of trial canter."

He was interrupted by the financier, who paused a moment in his departure to greet him with a friendly word: some interrogative jest about finding him in town on a Saturday in August, Ethel gathered.

"I do not know exactly how to put it," Livingston went on, when the man had passed out. "Our friendship has been so largely a matter of looking out at the passing world together, intimately, from a mutual point of view, that the introduction of ourselves into the picture seems incongruous and unnatural."

He paused to shake the ashes from his cigar and sip some coffee.

"Has it ever occurred to you that our relationship is peculiarly undefined?" She could not help but smile at the recollection his question aroused. Then, reminded of Midland and the afternoon, she found herself wondering for the sixth or seventh time during the meal, whether he had found anything in his ice-box for his own dinner. Something he had said in the afternoon made her think, perhaps, that it was empty. She wished she had remembered to offer him the remains of the corned-beef in her own ice-box.

"I cannot think of just the word," Livingston was saying, when she brought her mind back to him. "'Drifting' more or less describes it."

He paused again in smoking meditation.

"But I had best be blunt and to the point," he went on. "Of course, you are aware that I was married once. I never have talked of it, I know. I never can. But I must have referred to it, now and again."

"Yes," Ethel murmured; "she died twelve years or more ago, I've gathered." She was wondering whether Midland had received an answer to his telegram which she saw him going around the corner to send, almost immediately after the arrival of the satisfactory letter. And if he had, and the girl had failed him, would he have strength to keep away from the easy consolation? She tried to keep her anxiety from showing in her face.

"Twelve—nearly thirteen," Livingston answered. "I was terribly hard hit. I was young—twenty-six or seven. She had been the entire world to me. I reckoned all the rest only in its relation to her. I had let everything else go. If she had left a youngster, it would have been something to go on with—something to build a new life around."

He paused for a moment. His voice was firm and natural; there was no sentimentality or self-pity in his tone.

"Perhaps I might have found my place again with my old friends, the people I had grown up with before they became a mere background for her. But they all suggested something about her. They did not make me feel the presence of themselves so much as the absence of her among them."

"That was why you went to live abroad?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Then when time and a lot of aimless fads and occupations had healed things up a good bit, I came back. That was three or four years ago. I had put in the seven or eight years that should count for most in a man's life in doing anything to forget. And when I did return, I found that everything had passed me by. The place I might have dropped back to wasn't there any more. I found my friends advanced in their labors and their ambitions, happily entangled in domestic ties of which I was

no part, and engrossed in a coming generation.

"I don't want to be dull with self-history," he interrupted himself. "But I never have talked of this, and it is necessary that you know something of it to give me my answer. Besides, it was at about this time that you came in. I don't know how it worked about, but all sorts of things seemed to take on an interest and significance through approaching them with you. I do not mean that all this time I have been self-analyzing enough to realize that. But very lately, through the process of elimination, I have discovered that you were the most essential element, the most satisfying and most invigorating, that had come into my life in a dozen years. That is why I want to know if you will be my wife."

Ethel did not speak immediately. Oddly enough she felt little surprise. Her thoughts, though, were confused. She endeavored to make some one of them stand out from the many. And the only definite one seemed to be the question why she had not remembered to tell Mid about the quantity of beef in her ice-box. She could not help but smile.

"It is not a very impassioned proposal, is it?" Livingston smiled in intended answer. "But 'words' would seem rather foolish between us, don't you think? We know each other pretty thoroughly well; and we are practical folk. And I'm sure, in the long run, we would get a deal of happiness out of such a marriage. That is, of course, unless there is someone who means the bigger thing to you?"

"No," she replied. "In fact, I am not sure why I am hesitating. That I like you, you know; and it would be absurd to pretend disregard for the material difference it would make to me. Perhaps all that makes me feel how little I have to give in return. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is for a very selfish reason. More likely it is only because I am just a drifter."

Even through the tree-lined roadways of Central Park, as they drove to her home, there were only occasional flur-

ries of cool air. He had proposed that she give him no definite answer until Monday, when he should have returned from his Sunday at the South Side Club. She could send a note, or better, perhaps, wait to tell him at the dinner they had planned for Claremont on Monday evening. In any case, that engagement must stand.

But in spite of the postponed answer, they found themselves, during the drive, discussing the details of facing the new situation. His plans were numerous. She said little. He would have his sister ask her to Lenox for a fortnight. Or perhaps she would prefer first to visit his aunt at Southampton? But before she could express a preference he had concluded that the latter would be better. Then, in the early autumn he would take a camp in the Adirondacks, where he would make up a house-party to enable her to gain an intimate footing with her future friends.

She felt a peculiar sense of oppression. Evidently there was to be no question as to who her friends would be. But she was less occupied with the plans and duties that Livingston was piling up like a prison wall about her than with a mild surprise at the change of even tone of voice that an altered relationship makes in a man toward a woman. She realized, too, that these were only the first and least oppressive of the restrictions that quickly would multiply. And she was well aware that only Livingston's natural sense of decency and consideration restrained him from reference to more intimate changes in her mode of life that would be expected.

Then, suddenly, perhaps when the cab turned west toward a park gate that led to the ugly but familiar home street, she thought of the long, free day in the country tomorrow, and found herself trying to recall how much of a walk it was from the last subway station to Westchester village, and from there to the great sweep of shore along the Sound. And somehow the thought seemed to rush over her like a fresh, cool breeze.

Ethel felt an almost physical sense of relief when, as the cab turned into the unalluring, crowded uproar of One Hundred and First street, she saw lights in Aines's windows. Whatever the answer to his telegram was, then, he was accepting it quietly at home. When Livingston had said goodnight at the front door, as was his custom, she ran up the stairs two steps at a time and, entering her apartment, went directly to the kitchen. Disregarding her bounding dog, barking his welcome, and her cat who, at her entrance, lazily arose from his haven from the teasing terrier on the high wash-tubs, she crossed immediately to the dumbwaiter. Aines responded expectantly to the triple coo that was their own especial signal.

"It is early yet," she called. "Won't you come down to the roof-garden for a cigarette or two?"

Then, while she awaited his arrival, she tied a voluminous gingham apron over her handsome dinner gown and gave her attention to the protesting dog. From the pocket of her dress she drew forth a handkerchief which was just beginning to show discolorings of grease. Unrolling it, she produced the bones of a squab which she had slipped into concealment when Livingston was not looking. But if the men she dined with did not know of this custom, the terrier did. He appeared to expect it as his just reward for an evening alone with a cat who knew where to sleep beyond his reach. That less demonstrative animal purred a welcome to his mistress which was, perhaps, not wholly disinterested, since she immediately filled a bowl with milk with all the unhesitating despatch of habit. She was washing her hands after these familiar domestic duties when Midland Aines appeared.

"Well," she asked, with her nervous eyes on the towel instead of him, "did the telegram come?"

"Yes," he answered. Then: "Let's get out of this hot kitchen."

Without accepting the assistance he offered, she climbed out of one of the windows to the tin roof that overlooked the backyards.

"I've been throwing water down here from my window off and on all evening," Midland mentioned as he followed her. "Soaked the janitor's youngest hopeful with a bad aim one time, too."

There was but little more air here than in the apartment. A long, double row of asphalt yards, marked off by high wooden fences, was shut in by two almost unbroken walls of tall flat-buildings. Directly in back of Ethel's apartment were a few dwellings, forlornly closed for the summer or occupied only by servants. From the windows of the flats and from such of the fire-escapes as were not piled too high with boxes, buckets and canned goods, the pale, tired faces of sweltering humanity looked out, the men in shirt-sleeves with damp handkerchiefs tucked in at wilting collars, and the women, many fretfully rocking to and fro and fanning themselves with large palm-leaves, in kimonos and other filmy garments. From the streets beyond came the shrill cries of nervous, anemic children, excited in their overheating games. And from time to time Mrs. Finch's parrot, hanging in a window overhead, echoed their piercing shrieks. There seemed to be a lull in the uncultured singing and piano-playing that usually raged accompaniment to this scene. But in the yard of one of the empty houses an Irish servant drew forth the wailing ballads of her native land from an accordion.

Ethel's roof-garden, as she whimsically called the tin top of the lower flat's extension, was somewhat apart from its surroundings. Around its edge she had constructed a wire netting fence against which grew a protecting semi-circle of ferns and the cheaper potted plants. And she had converted two long, low flower-boxes into garden seats.

When they were seated there and Aines had lighted his cigarette, he finally answered her question:

"Yes," he said. "Her telegram came an hour or so ago. She has changed her mind. There's some other chap. That is about the sum of it. She doesn't put it just that way—sug-

gests that I come up and 'talk things over,'"

Ethel did not know exactly what to say. She understood too well the New England temperament, and Midland's in particular, to offer sympathy. She had been silent some time for want of words when Aines spoke again.

"And the strangest thing, Ethel, is that I don't seem to mind. I can't understand it. It has seemed for these two years or so that all my thoughts were of her; that I kept pushing on only to make a home for her. And then, tonight, while I waited for that telegram, I seemed somehow to dread the conclusion I had struggled for."

"That's it, Mid," Ethel murmured after a pause. She was gazing ahead of her, though perhaps not looking at the Irish woman who had long passed being the young, hopeful girl who had left the home that she still sang about. "I wonder if most of us don't find that we've forgotten what it was we wanted by the time we finally get it. I wonder if this hurrying, soulless city doesn't make drifters of great, great numbers of us—of those, I mean, who are just not quite good enough to rise above it. We come to it full of hope and purpose and determination. And then, a few years later, when we make an inventory of our possessions, we find that disillusionment and compromise have stripped the glory from the purpose; that struggle and disappointment have sapped the vigor from the determination; and that we cling to an undefined hope whose elusiveness and vagueness are its beauties."

Midland lighted a second cigarette and lazily threw the butt of his first to the yard below.

"Well, Mid," she said suddenly in a fresher, livelier tone, "here we are just where we were this afternoon, and where we will be next Saturday, and Thursday, and Tuesday—and a Saturday in August a year from now, I suppose."

After a few silent moments Aines rose to go. Then he paused.

"What is it you are thinking of so intently, Ethel?" he asked.

"Thinking of?" she echoed.

"Not worrying yourself, I hope, with the idea that I am more cut up about this than I show?"

"No," she answered lightly. "It is nothing a bit more weighty than a letter I want to write before I go to bed. I am dining with Carter on Monday and a detail of the evening was left for me to settle. I could tell him at Claremont, but I'd rather write. It is just to say that I want everything as it always has been—without any change."

After Aines had gone Ethel stood for some time gazing vacantly out of the window. A hand rested half-unconsciously on her dog's upturned head. If there was any air stirring it was kept out by the high brick walls, sun-baked through the long day. She pushed her soft hair back from her warm forehead. She was vaguely aware of the wailing song that the lonely Irish woman was playing to herself in the deserted asphalt yard, a song that was crude and perhaps maudlin, but that had tears in it.

Then she turned silently from the window. And as she went to prepare for bed, she lifted a calendar from her dressing-table and tore off and threw away the date of another day in August.



'TIS but a step from a courting scene to a scene in court.

THE LAUGHING DEVIL

By Marion Hill

MADE voluble by sudden discovery, an artless woman occasionally lets drop a remark which an artful one has thought of long since, but has concluded not to utter.

One midnight in April, Barnes's Repertoire Company was leaving the city of Wichita, where it had played a four weeks' engagement, and was lolling in possession of a passenger coach waiting to be pulled out of the depot, when Miss Cory Osborn parted with such a remark.

"I never pass close to Jim Barnes that I don't really *ache* to put my hand on him," she volunteered illuminatingly, smiling cheerily around at the others and quite unperceptive of the fact that handsome Barnes, behind whose seat she was standing, reddened consciously, and that many of the ladies in the company grew sternly wooden of feature.

The men took immense comfort in Barnes's discomfort.

"For purposes of chastisement, Miss Osborn, or—ah—otherwise?" probed Garth Nevin who, as juvenile man, permitted himself many youthful liberties in the way of inquiry. His boyish crop of vivid yellow hair covered a head ancient enough to know exactly how to frame that inquiry, too.

"*Quite* otherwise," freely contributed Cory, ingénue off the stage as well as on.

"Wanting to be a mother to him? or a sister?" was Garth's next anxious excursion along the path of sociological science.

"Don't mind him, you pretty little girl," eloquently urged Barnes, his tribute frankly sincere, as he threw her

a smiling glance over his shoulder, the same glance which every night "mowed down"—as the papers put it—whole ranks of feminine admirers in the audience. "Don't listen to him, Cory."

"Who ever does?" she said, so earnestly as to become her own avenger, and it was Garth's turn to redden.

For want of better occupation they all continued the "rigging" of Jim Barnes—which showed their honest liking for him. One who is not loved in a traveling company is always sure of being treated with a steady and large respect.

Languid and lovely Mary Mader, the leading lady, from a few seats ahead turned around to survey her stage lover commendingly. "Do you ever wish, Jim, that you were good instead of beautiful?" she insinuated gently but infusing into her voice a soft plaintiveness indicative of the wish's entire futility.

"Good? Beautiful? Mary, oh, Mary, why use words of which you know nothing?" chided Barnes.

"What have you done with your string of Wichita hearts, Jim?" demanded Garth, glancing under the seat in hopes of finding them, apparently.

"Expressed them to his wife," explained Cory. Then she wished she had not.

Jim's wife was an exceptionally small woman with unexceptionally large powers for making trouble, even when she was at a distance, as now—a jealous little firebrand who took none too charitably the legion of experiences to which poor Jim's "affinities" treated him.

"Expressed them paid, collect or on approval?" murmured Miss Mader to herself.

"Rage, ye hellhounds," quoth Jim genially.

"Once upon a time," broke out Garth, his eye calmly fixed upon the gas above his head, and reciting in naïve, *Peter-Pan* tones of inconsequence, "there was a little schoolboy, hazy in his memory, who was asked to number and name the zones. 'There are two zones,' he said, 'the masculine and the feminine. The masculine are either temperate or intemperate, and the feminine are either frigid or torrid.' Eh, Jim?"

"Barnes-y," ejaculated Mary Mader, "you look now just like your last picture. Do you know what I have written under the one you gave me?—'The Laughing Devil.'"

"Because it looks grave as a judge?" inquired Barnes ironically.

"Go 'head, little boy."

"And the explanation—?"

"—is to be found in the couplet, 'There lives a laughing devil in his eye Though hid 'neath seemly mask of gravity.'"

"And that Byronic kind of creature is I?"

"And that is you."

"Ought I to be glad of it?"

"Well," candidly, "the other person is inevitably the sorry one."

"Who is 'the other person'?"

"Jim," very rebukingly, "there is always 'the other person' where you are concerned."

"Feminine, torrid," murmured Garth dreamily.

"We're off!" came in thankful chorus from them all as the delayed car started.

John Everly, the old gentleman of the company, who did not dare show the previous unconcern of the others regarding their detention, fearing lest his lack of interest would be imputed to his advancing years, had been hanging half out of his window taking the affairs on the platform under his personal advisement. Now that the car jerked onward, he drew in his head and exclaimed with testy lack of gallantry:

"Fool of a woman! Waited for the

train to acquire actual speed before boarding it—yet has been hanging around for half an hour!"

As Everly was generally sputtering his disapproval of affairs in his own particular underworld, no one paid especial attention to him, and all settled themselves to get as comfortable as might be for the few hours' ride which was to ensue before they took on a sleeping-car, striving to obtain the napping possibilities of an entire seat to himself, or herself, as the case might be.

"Cory, linger near me!" implored Barnes in burlesque passion. He put his arms around her and coaxed her down in the seat in front of him. All he could see was the top of her hat, but he took comfort from it, not being built for solitude, ever.

"Don't lean over and talk to me," she prohibited, decidedly in earnest, tilting that hat upon her eyes, invitational of slumber.

"Talk I must!" he pleaded. "But to—?"

"Your conscience," advised Cory with severe finality.

The banter died out of his eyes as he settled himself back in his seat and retrospect, not untroubled, took gravely its place. But, whether in abstraction or vitality, he radiated a positive magnetic attraction which drew him to the instant regard of every passer-by, child, woman, man or beast; for even dogs, being scurried belatedly through to the baggage-car, would slew around in vainly frantic attempts to make friends with him, their yearning, straining eyes saying plainly, "Surely I am acquainted with you. If not I ought to be. And now is assuredly the time." Conductors, brakemen, porters, train-butchers, all seemed to find themselves jerked back instinctively toward his section, inevitably volunteering some trivial speech for no other reason than to be spoken to by him, and nine times out of nine and a half the stranger's kindly hand would find its way to Barnes's shoulder. The love of his fellows was always a-squander on the altar of Jim's radiant inattention, for

Jim had the magic gift of not caring—than which nothing more surely woos sacrificial affection. This particular night, however, in smileless reverie, he looked—a little—as if he cared.

Back of him, the door opened to admit of the entrance into the car, now running at its regulation speed, of a veiled woman who advanced up the aisle hesitatingly, plainly on the lookout for a particular someone. As she swayed past John Everly, his old eyes kindled with reminiscent condemnation, showing that she was the "fool" of his recent comment.

Coming to Barnes's section, she glided in, sat down beside him, turned to him and raised her veil, disclosing a face young, pretty, emotional and good, all these qualities being tempered by the fact that she was extremely blonde; and there is no predication a blonde.

At first sight of her, Jim's face lit up like a cathedral, and he exclaimed ingratiatingly, "Why, Mrs. Ray, this is the gladdest kind of a surprise. So gloriously unexpected. Just like your charming self." Then, as the strange expression on her face accentuated the immense strangeness of her being there at all, he suffered an answering sort of horror to darken his own features and stammered, "For heaven's sake—Elsa—"

"Oh, leave out 'heaven,'" she said quickly and wildly. "It is for your sake that I am here."

"For my sake!" He dwelt on the idea rather dully; and if ever a man wished heaven the benefits of the moment, rather than himself, that man was Jim Barnes.

"Perhaps I should say for *mine*," she hurried on. "I cannot face the future without you. You have become the world to me."

Though he put his hand tenderly upon hers, yet his glance strayed uncomfortably toward the top of Cory's hat. He did not know whether to be assured or disturbed by its utter absence of vibration.

"Dear Mrs. Ray—"

"It must be 'Elsa' always!"

"'Elsa, always'—ah, how beautiful

of you! But you are unable to say a word that is *not* beautiful. Dearest lady, this is but a poor place to talk, is it not? We might be overheard and misunderstood. The lovely long talks we have had in the near past!"

"Oh, Jim, have we not? And when I realized what anguish it would be to do without them, forever, I knew my own heart. You often said a woman who knew her own heart and then acted against it was false not only to herself, and the man she loved, but false to God as well."

"I said that?" murmured Jim unguardedly.

"Oh, you cannot have forgotten the many things you said?"

"Indeed, no; never."

"And surely you were sincere in all?"

"On my honor!" affirmed Jim, barely suppressing a groan. Jim was always sincere. That was his big trouble. No liar and hypocrite ever got into one millionth of his difficulties, all traceable to his sincerity—of the moment.

"Your many wonderful words came crowding into my memory to counsel and strengthen me. So many times have you insisted that you had no respect at all for a wife who let a mere ceremony keep her bound to a man whom she had ceased to love."

"None," observed Jim, agreeing heroically with himself.

"That the marriage of mind, the union of heart-interests was being recognized by both church and state as the only valid one."

"The only." He breathed the words devotionally. "And I wonder how I made it out." This last, however, he did not say; it was merely written upon his subconsciousness.

"And when you said to me this morning that parting from me was the death sentence passed upon all that was worthiest in you—"

"Was that only this morning?" parried Jim. It had seemed longer ago; safely longer.

She flashed him a grateful smile—taking the remark tributively. Whether man be the wooer or the wooed is a small matter compared with the estab-

lished fact that he is always wrestling with one of two supreme difficulties, trying to prevent his fiery utterances from sounding coldly abstract to the woman he loves, and his intellectual abstractions from sounding fervid to the woman who loves him. Elsa Ray was attuned for fervency, and she was capable of hearing it even in the rattle of the train.

"I wondered if I had the right to kill that worthiness. I could sacrifice myself, but could I sacrifice you?"

"Always noble." He brought out the words automatically.

Up to this point he had been Chesterfieldian and artificial, enjoying the episode impersonally. While not theatrical, he was essentially of the dramatic temperament, insensibly developing "situations" wherever possible, phrasing them and posing them as fitly as he knew how, not exactly because he was an actor, needing applause, needing to be in the public eye, but rather because he was an artist and was under compulsion, being such, to satisfy his appreciation of the effective. He had a beautiful voice, practically equipped like a church organ with "melodia," "tremolo," "harmonic" and "celestina" stops, which stops he used with the accuracy of a musician, rejoicing in the effects he was visibly able to produce upon those who listened to him. Yet he unquestionably was sincere, even while scientifically noting that he had drawn tears with a quiver here, or cajoled smiles with a quaver there; as a virtuoso upon a violin, so Jim upon his vocal chords—and why should the one result be lauded as achievement, the other branded as affectation?

He passed for a wonderful conversationalist merely because his elocution was perfect, his smile limpid and sweet, and because his eyes were brilliant and sympathetic. It was an after-dinner trick of his, in place of a speech, sometimes to count in French or Italian from one to twenty, and so extraordinary was his command over tone, smile and glance that his companions would be

either laughing or crying before fifteen was reached, according to Jim's will.

The habit of fascination had become second nature with him and he was powerless to drop it even now when the unbelievable forced itself to be believed and he was face to face with this really monstrous occurrence, brought about by his own meaningless cajolery and a vain woman's madness and badness.

Even while his mind raged helplessly thinking of his wife and his two little boys, thinking of George Ray, his friend, thinking of the inevitable notoriety menacing everybody concerned, he employed no saner method of combating facts than by politely flirting with them. He always made violent love to women, not because he held them in low esteem, but in the highest, and was generously ready to go all lengths to prove it.

Piercing through his inane suavity, there must have gleamed at least a hint of his inward anger and disgust, for she grew suddenly frightened and cried:

"Jim, be as merciful to me as you can, for I have wrecked my world for you!"

"No," he said, "you have not. I would not let you, caring for you immensely as I do." Her distressed appeal for help had aroused perfectly his common sense; he now was but groping for the kindest words in which to arouse hers. "This was delicious of you, giving me an opportunity of a last little glimpse, and I appreciate it more than you think. You are visiting some distant friend, perhaps, or have arranged to take the return train at one of—?"

"You do not understand—" she broke in.

He stopped her with tact and gentleness. "Trust me, my dear little lady, to understand you better than you do yourself; that is why I ask you to listen to me; you are paying a sudden visit to a friend—"

"It is all useless, useless!" cried Elsa Ray desperately. "I have burned the bridges behind me!"

"Tell me how."

"I have broken with George forever."

He stopped a moment to think. "Again—do you mind telling me how?"

"I wrote all—*this*—he was away from the house—and left the letter pinned to his pillow. There is no going back—*for me!*"

The reproach and bitterness in the accusation brought the conscious red to his cheeks; but he kept on courageously in her behalf. "He may not yet have returned."

"Don't you know George Ray a little better than that?" she asked curiously.

"Yes, I do," said Barnes gravely. He was looking at his watch.

"He was to be back from the Tamaracks at twelve o'clock. Mr. Nichols promised me."

"Mr. Nichols?"

"I don't think you have met him. He has bought a new auto, and he took a little party of men out to the roadhouse to try it. George was one."

"Then he has not read your letter yet," said Cory, coming suddenly but firmly into the conversation. She turned around and knelt upon her seat, facing the startled pair over the back of it, and haranguing them with low-voiced decision. "Jim, pick up Mrs. Ray's veil and gloves, for the train is slowing down for the first stop and she is going to get off. Mrs. Ray, your husband will not be allowed to get home till daybreak and after. The whole ride was a practical joke. Mr. Billy Nichols invited all the men who are adored by their wives (excuse me, if this sounds sarcastic; it is not *my* fault), and he is going to strap them to their chairs and keep them till morning. He told me all about it and I could not quite see the joke at the time, but now I think it's first rate. We're stopping. Come, I'll see you to the platform. Jim! sit down and stay sitting! Mrs. Ray, I said *come*."

"Oh, suppose he *is* at home," cried Elsa Ray protestingly, although, obeying the young girl's dynamic force, she was already in the aisle.

Cory was methodically scribbling across the *Miss Cory Osborn* on one of her visiting-cards the penciled words, *I shall expect you at the train tonight.*

"Take this. Tell him you wrote the letter as a little practical joke of your own. That you came to see me off and got carried away by the train."

"But it wouldn't be the truth," cried Elsa Ray. No angel could have looked more horrified.

"Truth! What's the good of truth at a time like this," flamed Cory, virtuously enraged. "Don't you dare spoil things with truth. Come on."

Pushed by the passengers behind her, quite as much as drawn by Cory's commands ahead of her, she "came on" and Jim Barnes stayed "sitting." It is wonderful, this obedience of all human kind to any and every voice which speaks with sufficient authority.

When the train refilled and started on again, Cory Osborn returned alone and sat right down by Barnes. He had not expected it.

"I want to tell you what I think of you," said Cory.

"Oh, you noble little girl to save a sister-woman," he ejaculated.

"Sister-fiddlesticks," replied Cory decidedly. "What I did was solely for you, Jim; though I don't approve of you."

"Oh, Cory!"

"Much of these affairs is not your fault, I admit. The way you are mobbed by everything in skirts, from schoolgirls who give you flowers to women who give you receptions, through to old ladies who give you peppermints, is something awful. They write to you and 'phone to you and besiege the hotels and throng the stage door (take that satisfied look off your face at once—I'm ashamed of you), and ever so often there comes along one like this last. I wonder how you can respect a single woman on earth, Jim."

"There are the Cory Osborns," he said gratefully, raising her hand to his lips.

She thoroughly slapped him with it. "The Cory Osborns." And next year you'll be saying, 'What's the name of this little thing we had with us last season?' You'll have forgotten. As I said before, I'm going to tell you what

I think of you; you're just nothing but fireworks."

"They are not to be despised."

"They are all over as soon as they are begun, though. Your one idea is to light up well. You may not have a cloven hoof, Jim, but you have a cleft in your chin, which is worse, for it looks 'melting' and 'tender' and all the other idiotic things the papers say about you, and you have a 'winning' smile and 'fine' eyes which 'glow' and 'gleam' and 'glitter' and 'glimmer' straight on through the G's, and you set everything off at once just for the fun of it, and then you wonder when a spark drops in a gunpowder barrel what caused the thing to blow up."

"Are you scolding me?"

"I don't know; that's the truth. Oh! she's made me hate the word! She'll sniff whenever she hears my name, now, and will say, 'Miss Osborn has no regard whatever for the truth.' Maybe not; but I wouldn't desert my husband for *you*, Jim Barnes!"

"Wouldn't you, Cory?" wheedled Jim, almost plaintively. Then, happier, "But you haven't any husband."

"Indeed I have," exclaimed Cory hotly. "I've a dear. Good old Bert!"

"Is Bert his name?" asked Barnes, genuinely interested.

She looked a steely reproach. "I congratulate you that you have so readily and completely put this horrible thing out of your thoughts."

"What horrible thing? Oh, that!" Here he commenced to laugh, neither flippantly nor rudely, but with quiet, unfeigned amusement, putting his arm boyishly over his face to have his laugh out.

She got up at once.

"I can't help it, Cory," he stammered radiantly. "It was all so funny; she was so tragic, and I was so frightened; and there you were listening—oh, it was funny, it was, it was!"

Cory's eyes looked wistfully into space toward the presumable whereabouts of the tragic "she." "Think of the lonely little creature," she begged, "traveling back—in the dark."

"Cory, don't," entreated Barnes, using both arms this time. "You only make it funnier and funnier."

"How anybody can care a pin for you passes my comprehension," said Cory coldly. Under the rebuke, he took his arms from his face and let the light die out of it. "Jim, dear," she concluded quickly, "try to get a little nap. You look tired to death, poor boy."



HER LIBERALITY

MR. HENNYPECK—My wife has never denied me a wish since we were married.

FRIEND—But—ah—h'm!—I thought—

"No, indeed! She lets me wish all I want to."



NOT SAFE NOW

HE—I used to flirt desperately with that woman.

SHE—You quit it, eh?

"You bet I did. Her husband died."

REQUIESCAT

By Elsa Barker

WHY do you cry so loudly underground,
Buried Ideal! Have I not laid you deep,
And drugged you with stern truths to make you sleep,
And set the cross above your low, bare mound?

You were the last of all my rainbow band.
For years I hid you in a guarded place,
That none might view your sweet unearthly face,
Nor hear your words no brain could understand.

Even to you has come the destined hour
That waits for all things lovely. On your brow
I laid my lips in parting, to walk now
The lone, unfriended, alien path of power.

Why do you haunt me still with yearning cries?
Long have you stood between me and the goal
Only discovered by the clear-eyed soul
That dares the face of Life without disguise.

Never again till cold earth covers me
Can you and I hold counsel the night through.
Never again can I deny for you
What all the mocking gods declare to be.



NOT ALONE IN HIS METHODS

DYER—Did the financial stringency affect you any?
RYER—I should say so! I had to pay several bills in order to obtain further credit.



THE SPICE OF LIFE

ASHLEY—Do you have much variety in your boarding-house?
SEYMOUR—Well, we have three different names for the meals.

LA LUMIÈRE

Par Michel Provins

Dans un site assez élevé, dominant une vallée du Morvan veloutée de prairies et de bois, une large et haute maison de style ancien — la demeure familiale où veillent, à l'ombre des murs épais et des poutres à la française, les souvenirs et les traditions du passé. Aveugle depuis près de vingt ans, l'écrivain Valbrey vit là avec sa femme, loin de Paris, où un jour, en plein travail, en plein succès, il a été subitement frappé de l'affreuse infirmité. Jeté hors de la lutte, il est venu se réfugier dans la maison qui avait été le berceau de ses seules joies : son enfance, son mariage, la naissance de ses deux fils, grands aujourd'hui, et qu'il revoit aux vacances près de lui. L'œuvre littéraire de Valbrey, continuée dans la nuit des yeux, qui donne plus d'espace, plus de ciel à la pensée, est devenue très haute — œuvre dictée par lui à la compagne toujours très aimée, à la consolatrice toujours remerciée.

Ce jour-là — la fin d'un après-midi de septembre — Valbrey, assis seul sur la terrasse, semble regarder l'admirable décor rendu presque réel pour lui par l'intensité du souvenir de chaque chose, par le parfum de l'air, par la tiédeur du soleil dont la caresse lui donne comme une sensation de vue. — Plus loin, causent ses fils. — Derrière lui, dans un salon, Andrée sa femme, parle à voix basse avec Claude Gervin, un ami de toujours du ménage Valbrey.

ANDRÉE, à Gervin, qui élève trop la voix. — Pas si fort, il va nous entendre !

GERVIN. — Vous avez toujours peur ?

ANDRÉE. — Oui . . . les aveugles acquièrent une puissance extraordinaire pour distinguer ce que nous ne percevons même pas ; et c'est vrai, j'ai peur, j'ai toujours peur qu'un mot entendu détruise toute sa pauvre illusion de bonheur !

GERVIN. — Mais vous avez été, vous êtes pour lui une épouse admirable !

ANDRÉE. — Une infirmière dévouée, une compagne attentive, obéissante, oui, mais pas une épouse, vous le savez bien, pas une épouse au sens de pleine fidéli-

té, d'affection unique que je lui devrais et que je ne lui donne pas !

GERVIN. — Tant d'excuses ! . . .

ANDRÉE. — Oh ! on s'en trouve toujours et de merveilleuses pour bercer sa conscience ! . . . Je m'en suis trouvé naturellement ! Et que j'ai été privée brusquement de la vie que réclamaient ma jeunesse et mes goûts ! Et que, peu à peu, mon cœur s'est détaché d'un infirme ! . . . Et que les forces de résistance ont des limites surtout avec des circonstances toujours favorables. Et que votre amour si patient, si profond a eu raison, à la fin, de toute ma volonté ! Vous m'avez dit et je me suis répété cela des milliers de fois, pour me convaincre seulement pendant les minutes où votre regard me domine et où je sens votre caresse. Mais entre cela. . . Mais après ? . . .

GERVIN. — Vous êtes dans vos jours de scrupules ? . . .

ANDRÉE, *mélancolique*. — Peut-être ! Nous vieillissons ! . . .

Dehors. — Albert, à son frère Julien qui bâille à se désarticuler des mâchoires :

ALBERT. — Tu t'embêtes à vingt francs l'heure ?

JULIEN. — Si encore c'était à ce prix ! C'est effroyable, deux mois dans ce trou perdu.

ALBERT. — Que veux-tu ? . . . C'est à cause du père. . . .

JULIEN. — Je sais bien ! . . . Mais ce n'est pas drôle tous les jours ici, entre son austérité d'invalides et l'hypocrisie de maman qui ne pense qu'à son Gervin ! . . . Au moins, elle, s'amuse !

ALBERT. — Tu dis des choses ! . . .

JULIEN. — Est-ce moi qui les fais ? . . .

ALBERT. — Non ! . . . Je suis de ton avis ! . . . Il y a des moments où l'on a joliment envie de reprendre le train.

JULIEN.—Tu as reçu une lettre de Riquette?

ALBERT.—Oui . . . elle s'assomme avec son vieux, à Trouville! . . . Elle voudrait bien que je sois auprès d'elle. . . . Et moi aussi! . . .

JULIEN.—Moi, je n'ai pas de nouvelles d'Irène! . . . J'ai peur que son mari lui fasse des embêtements. . . . Elle doit trop laisser voir qu'elle est triste de mon absence! . . . (*Impatient.*) Ah! ce que je voudrais filer!

Tout le monde est interrompu par l'arrivée inattendue d'un visiteur: un événement à la compagnie. C'est le docteur Richardet, quel, que peu cousin de Valbrey, parti de France depuis de longues années, et qui y revient après situation faite. N'ayant pas de parents, son premier soin a été de chercher Valbrey à Paris, et, sur les indications données, d'accourir jusque chez lui. Au milieu des exclamations de surprise qui l'accueillent, Richardet s'étonne de l'hésitation de Valbrey à venir près de lui.

ANDRÉE.—Il ne vous voit pas! . . . Il est aveugle!

RICHARDET, *bouleversé*.—Aveugle? Ah! mon pauvre ami! . . .

Très ému, il le prend dans ses bras et le serre contre lui.

VALBREY, *l'embrassant*.—Mon cœur et mes mains te cherchaient! . . . Je suis si heureux de te sentir . . . si malheureux de ne pas te voir! . . . Assieds-toi! . . . Causons!

RICHARDET.—Mais dis-moi, d'abord? . . . Comment as-tu perdu la vue? . . . La chose m'intéresse doublement puisque là-bas, en Australie, où j'ai gagné une petite fortune, c'est surtout par des travaux d'ophtalmologie que je me suis fait connaître.

VALBREY.—Hélas! tous les princes de la science ont examiné mon cas! . . .

RICHARDET, *haussant les épaules*.—Oui, oh! les princes de la science! . . . Moi, j'ai fait énormément de pratique, et de la pratique avec des gens sur lesquels je ne craignais pas d'expérimenter certaines idées nouvelles à moi! . . . Et j'ai trouvé des choses . . . beaucoup de choses! . . . Alors, raconte!

VALBREY.—C'est un soir, j'écrivais (*Modeste*) car tu sais que j'ai fait quelques livres!

RICHARDET.—Toujours le même! . . . Il appelle quelques livres des œuvres qui

l'ont rendu célèbre! . . . Alors, donc, tu écrivais? . . .

ANDRÉE.—Nous étions près de lui . . . Je tenais Albert et Julien, qui avaient quatre et cinq ans et qui disaient tout bas qu'il ne fallait pas faire de bruit "parce que le papa était dans le travail!"

VALBREY.—. . . Tout d'un coup, j'ai jeté la plume, poussant un cri. . . . J'avais éprouvé aux deux yeux une douleur d'élanement. . . .

RICHARDET.—Puis presque tout de suite un brouillard?

VALBREY.—Oui, allant s'épaississant très vite. . . .

RICHARDET.—Tu croyais que la lampe s'était éteinte? . . .

ANDRÉE.—C'est cela! . . . Il a demandé de la lumière! . . . Nous étions affolés! . . . J'ai allumé des candélabres! J'ai mis devant ses yeux la flamme des bougies! Rien! . . . Ah! quelles heures nous avons vécues!

VALBREY, *prenant la main de sa femme, à Richardet*.—Tu ne sauras jamais combien elle a été bonne, dévouée. . . . (*A ses enfants.*) Et les petits aussi! . . . Ils m'ont tous entouré, consolé! . . . C'est eux trois qui m'ont fait l'existence supportable. . . . (*Entendant Gervin.*) Et j'oubliais aussi le plus fidèle des amis, venant à chaque instant de Paris me renseigner sur le placement de mes travaux, me tenant au courant de tous, me rattachant à la vie! . . . Je l'aurais eue presque heureuse, la vie, avec eux tous, si on pouvait avoir du bonheur sans la lumière! . . . (*Soupirant.*) La lumière, c'est la joie, c'est la beauté des choses rendue vivante, c'est l'âme désemmurée de son infranchissable prison noire!

RICHARDET *reste un instant frappé de l'attitude gênée de tous après les paroles de Valbrey, puis lui prenant la main*.—Eh bien! je te la rendrai peut-être, moi, la lumière!

VALBREY, *ému*.—Tu dis? . . . (*Puis tout de suite découragé.*) Tu vas encore faire une expérience? . . . Les autres n'ont pas réussi! . . .

RICHARDET.—Qu'est-ce qu'ils avaient diagnostiqué exactement, les autres?

VALBREY.—J'en ai consulté sept. J'ai

eu sept opinions différentes! . . . Andrée te donnera les ordonnances. J'ai suivi leurs traitements, subi leurs essais douloureux, et j'en suis resté au même point. On ne peut pas faire de miracle!

RICHARDET.—Il ne s'agit pas de miracle! . . . Veux-tu me laisser t'étudier, analyser ton mal et réfléchir? nous agirons après!

VALBREY.—A quoi bon me faire souffrir? Maintenant j'ai accepté le destin, j'ai abandonné les luttes, les rêves d'ambition, d'avenir, j'ai vécu la plus grande partie de ma vie; pour le reste, je suis ici, presque résigné, presque un peu heureux parce que je me sens dans un cadre où je l'ai été complètement, au milieu de personnes et de choses très chères qui font que je me compose un présent supportable en respirant le passé. Alors, je le répète, pourquoi me faire souffrir?

RICHARDET.—Je ne te ferai souffrir—et très peu—que si je suis certain du succès.

VALBREY.—Pourquoi surtout me donner la fièvre d'un espoir impossible? Tu ne peux pas avoir cette certitude! . . . Ton affection voudrait l'irréalisable! . . . Et rien que de le penser, rien que d'en parler, tu vois bien que cela me bouleverse? Tout cela pour que je tombe ensuite plus bas d'une illusion plus haute!

RICHARDET.—Allons! . . . Ne t'exalte pas! . . . Je te jure que je ne tenterai l'expérience que si je me convaincs qu'elle sera victorieuse. Nous n'en sommes pas là. Je ne te demande pour l'instant que de me donner le vivre et le couvert pendant quelques semaines. Tu ne vas pas refuser l'hospitalité à ton vieil ami? . . .

VALBREY.—Grand Dieu! mais je suis trop content! . . . Reste! . . . Installe-toi! . . . Ne me quitte plus même! (*Il serre encore les mains de Richardet—et les gardant.*) Tout de même, si un jour je pouvais revoir ceux que je j'aime! . . .

Pendant qu'il s'éloigne, Andrée s'approche du docteur.

ANDRÉE.—Vous n'espérez pas vraiment?

RICHARDET.—Au contraire! plus que je ne l'ai dit.

ANDRÉE, *agitée*.—Vous lui rendriez la vue complètement?

RICHARDET.—Si je ne me trompe pas sur certains indices, oui, complètement! (*Etonné encore de son attitude.*) Vous seriez heureuse?

ANDRÉE, *ayant conscience de son attitude, se dominant*.—Oui! . . . oh! oui! . . . Seulement la joie fait peur! . . .

RICHARDET, *voyant qu'elle échange un regard avec Gervin*.—En effet! . . .

Après des semaines de soins, un jour, Richardet, convaincu de son diagnostic, décide une opération qui réussit à merveille. Il fait ensuite un pansement que Valbreys devra garder quelques jours.

RICHARDET, *au réveil de l'opéré*.—Voilà, c'est fait!

VALBREY, *narré*.—Je ne vois toujours pas!

RICHARDET.—Naturellement! Pas si vite! . . . Tu as un appareil sur les paupières; mais lundi tu l'enlèveras et tu verras!

VALBREY, *sceptique*.—Hélas!

RICHARDET.—J'en suis si sûr que je pars aujourd'hui pour Paris où j'ai tout de même pas mal d'affaires à régler, ne m'y étant pas arrêté avant de venir ici. Je rentrerai la semaine prochaine et c'est toi-même qui viendras me chercher à la gare! . . . Rien à faire d'ici là qu'à te reposer et à te tenir l'esprit en joie!

La semaine suivante.—A la gare.—Après l'arrivée du train ramenant Richardet. Valbreys, qui a retrouvé excellemment l'usage de ses yeux, est là. Sans une parole, les deux hommes s'étreignent.

RICHARDET.—Tu m'as écrit une lettre trop enthousiaste lundi dernier. Je ne suis ni un dieu, ni un sauveur, mais tout simplement un brave homme de médecin qui a compris ce que tu avais. . . . Tu vois bien, maintenant?

VALBREY.—Aussi bien qu'avant.

RICHARDET.—Et tu es heureux?

VALBREY, *sans répondre*.—Tu as fait une admirable chose! (*Désignant une voiture qui attend.*) Montons!

RICHARDET, *très surpris*.—Nous n'allons donc pas chez toi?

VALBREY.—Plus tard! . . . Faisons un tour.

Il donne un ordre au cocher.

RICHARDET, *dans la voiture qui roule sur la grand' route, le regardant.*—Qu'est-ce qu'il y a? Je m'attendais à un visage épanoui, je te trouve une mine ravagée? . . .

VALBREY.—Il y a que je suis atrocement malheureux!

RICHARDET.—Parce que je t'ai rendu la lumière?

VALBREY.—Excuse-moi! . . . Je te remercie du fond du cœur de ton miracle, mais je ne savais pas ce que je demandais!

RICHARDET, *blessé.*—Deviens-tu fou?

VALBREY.—Peut-être! . . . Tu es un merveilleux médecin, et tu es l'ami—le seul ami—écoute-moi bien . . . je vais t'expliquer . . . si vraiment je suis fou, tu soigneras le déséquilibré comme tu as enlevé l'appareil?

RICHARDET.—Voyons! . . . Que s'est-il passé? . . . D'abord, le jour où tu as soigné l'aveugle!

VALBREY.—Tout de suite, j'ai *vu*, en poussant un triomphant cri de joie! . . . Ah! si tu avais été là! . . . Au moins cette minute t'aurait payé! . . . Maintenant, j'ai l'air d'un ingrat!

RICHARDET.—Non . . . parle. Tu as vu! . . . Et ensuite?

VALBREY.—Ma femme, mes fils, Gervin étaient autour de moi . . . Tu ne peux pas t'imaginer? . . . Je savais que c'étaient eux et je les ai pris pour des personnes quelconques. . . . Ce n'étaient plus les êtres dont l'image, il y a vingt ans, était restée photographiée dans mon cerveau . . . leur dernière image lumineuse!

RICHARDET.—Naturellement, l'âge est venu pour tous.

VALBREY.—Oui. D'abord, Andrée, que j'avais laissée si finement jolie, m'est apparue dans la maturité grasse, un peu épaisse, sensuelle, de la quarantaine; mes fils sont devenus des hommes, des personnages à qui j'ai failli dire: Monsieur! Gervin aussi m'a fait l'effet de . . . Mais nous en reparlerons tout à l'heure.

RICHARDET.—Tu devais bien t'atten-

dre à ce que les visages et les corps aient sensiblement changé?

VALBREY.—C'est leur expression, surtout, qui est devenue étrange . . . et que je ne connais plus! . . . À ce point que tant que j'ai été aveugle, que je continuais en moi l'éclosion de la dernière empreinte lumineuse, c'étaient les sons de voix d'autrefois qu'il me semblait entendre. Et là, tout à coup, devant les visages nouveaux, ce sont les voix de ces visages que j'ai entendues: voix et expressions nouvelles, bizarres . . . et fausses!

RICHARDET.—Fausses? . . . Qu'est-ce que tu imagines?

VALBREY.—Oh! je n'imagine plus, je vois. . . . (*Navré.*) Ah! oui, je vois bien!

RICHARDET.—Tu t'es fourré dans la tête? . . .

VALBREY.—Mon pauvre vieil ami, ne cherche pas à me donner le change! Ayant habité deux mois ici, il n'est pas possible que ce qui s'y passe t'ait échappé! (*Surprenant un mouvement de Richardet.*) Parfaitement! Tu as compris! . . . Eh bien! moi aussi! . . . Oh! pas tout de suite! . . . c'était si inattendu pour moi, si invraisemblable d'horreur! . . . Mais des regards m'ont d'abord étonné, des attitudes, dont l'habitude, malgré leur attention, les trahit peu à peu; et surtout, il y eut l'hypocrisie des attentions, des affections, de la femme, de l'ami, des fils; l'hypocrisie devenue perceptible par la dissonance entre les paroles et l'expression de ceux qui les disent; cette hypocrisie qui m'échappait avant, puisque j'entendais les sons sans voir les grimaces! Ah! Dieu, elles sont là, affreuses, devant moi maintenant, les grimaces de la femme dans le mensonge de l'adultère, du camarade dans le mensonge de l'amitié, et des enfants dans le mensonge de la piété filiale! . . .

RICHARDET.—Ah! pour eux, au moins, tu as tort?

VALBREY.—Allons donc! Je les ai embêtés par ma retraite, mon infirmité, ma tristesse! Décidément, il ne faut pas demander à l'humanité plus qu'elle ne peut donner. La leur les appelle vers le plaisir, l'ardeur de la vie; celle

d'Andrée et de Gervin les a appelés vers la passion née du contact de chaque jour. Je ne dois pas trop leur en vouloir : tout cela sans doute était fatal en raison des circonstances où nous étions placés ; mais, vraiment, il vaut mieux vivre dans le monde sans regarder ce qui s'y passe.

RICHARDET.—Tu dis cela maintenant que tu as retrouvé tes deux yeux !

VALBREY.—Ah ! je te jure que je regrette mon rêve et ma prison noire ! Le bonheur ne se réalise jamais, mais en tout cas son apparence ne peut être que pour ceux qui existent sans voir et sans savoir ! Maintenant, je sais, et ta science, ton affection qui ont réalisé le miracle de me donner la lumière ne

pourront pas faire la merveille bien-faisante de me rendre la nuit !

RICHARDET, *désolé*.—Pardonne-moi ! Nous ne savons jamais si les actions qui nous paraissent les meilleures nous conduisent vers le bien ou le mal ! (*Après un grand silence.*) Maintenant qu'est-ce que tu vas faire ?

VALBREY.—Comment ?

RICHARDET.—Oui, avec ta femme, tes enfants . . . l'autre ?

VALBREY.—Je vais rentrer avec eux à Paris, reprendre mes occupations, continuer, comme tout le monde, la comédie que chacun joue et à laquelle personne ne se prend : c'est bien la formule de la possibilité de vivre : être aveugle ou le devenir !



ONLY A BOY

By John Kendrick Bangs

ONLY a boy with a budding soul;
Only a boy with an eager heart;
Eye firmly fixed on a golden goal,
Ready to do his allotted part.

Only a woman of idle days;
Only a woman of thoughtless mind,
Given to light and frivolous ways,
All of a mildly flirtatious kind.

Only a woman, only a boy;
Only a chance for a summer jest.
Only a vision of blissful joy
Entered upon with a heedless zest.

ENVOI

Only a bitter, cold winter's day.
Only a woman weary of play.
Only a boy with a foolish start
Turned to a man with a cynic's heart!

WALLACE AND A LORELEI

By Harry James Smith

TWICE it fell to the lot of Wallace Firkins to overhear words not intended for his ears; and the first time they were the sweetest, soothingest words he had ever listened to; and the second time they were nothing less than catastrophic. If you object to stories that open pleasantly and end dreadfully, be warned in time; for here you are to learn of the wicked wiles of a certain Lorelei, who sate upon the rocks of Longcliff and did entice Wallace—and that was all very enjoyable while it lasted; but when the spell was broken, came wrath; and this is the painful part of the story.

But to recount these things in order, just as they happened. Firkins had been four or five days already at the Longcliff, which has the name, as you know, of being the most exclusive of the North Shore hostleries; and on the morning we are speaking of he was sitting at his ease on the broad veranda, listlessly perusing a novel; and these are the words that were borne to his ears from somewhere behind him:

"Who is he, anyway? Have you happened to hear?"

Wallace knew the source of the question. He had noticed two matrons, quite unmistakably of the Back Bay type, seated with their embroidery a little way down the veranda. Need we blame him for pricking up his ears? It was a singularly quiet moment of the morning, without even an intruding throb from the hotel piano. Wallace heard with perfect distinctness.

"Somebody said a young manufacturer from Buffalo," came the answer. "Ordered away, I fancy, for a complete rest."

An indistinguishable murmur followed, and then:

"Not what I should call a Middle West manner, at all events," resumed the first voice, judicially. "Nothing of the parvenu. I flatter myself that I can always pick them out. He's not trying to make an impression, you notice—dignified, reserved—the marks of a man of breeding."

Wallace experienced a fine thrill of exultation, for these words constituted a final testimony to the success of his great venture. It was an exquisite revenge. For years he had dreamed of this moment, planned for it, saved for it, gone without a thousand small pleasures in order to make it possible.

Firkins was exceptionally good-looking, and that had been a foundation. Observant, adaptable and not at all lacking in self-confidence, he had made practical application of all he had learned in ten years behind the counter of an exclusive haberdasher's shop. From tireless study of the well-groomed young aristocrats who passed in and out before him every day, he had mastered the nice art of selecting and wearing right apparel; he had modeled his speech upon theirs; he had acquired their reserved, slightly bored manner.

"Hmph!" he often had said to himself, "it's not so hard! If I only had the chance I could fool them all."

Well, he had created the chance at last. For one single, unprecedented, never-perhaps-to-be-repeated fortnight, he had put a full thousand miles between himself and the scene of his captivity in Egypt; he had entered the land of promise and taken possession.

A pleasant sense of superiority accompanied his triumph. He had proved to himself how easy it was. They fancied that a gulf separated them from the rest of mankind—he had crossed it in a day and a night; and the doors were opened to him. The matron from Back Bay, who flattered herself that she could always “pick them out,” had but put the seal of finality upon the convictions which he had secretly entertained for many a long year.

In this mood of superior self-satisfaction—one of the most enjoyable moods known to man—Mr. Firkins went in to lunch, taking his place, as usual, at one of the less frequented tables, and rehearsing in memory the lovely scene in which he had just been a passive but vital figure. He had not even noticed who was sharing the table with him, until suddenly a bewitching little creature with light, wavy, yellow hair and a roguish, slightly pouting mouth, leaned over toward him, and resting her chin on one hand with confiding informality, addressed him.

“Do you know, Mr. Misanthrope, I almost think we might manage to be good friends.”

Firkins had something of a start; but he did not lose countenance. His lips were shaping themselves for a reply when she cut him off with a ripple of captivating laughter:

“I suppose you think it’s odd of me to address a perfect stranger in this way; but the fact is, you see, I can’t think you are quite a stranger. You’re different somehow from the other men about. The instant I saw you I was sure of it, and I’ve watched you now for three days—you loathe all these fat, dull, prosy folks, don’t you?—There, I knew you did. I believe I have an unerring instinct for people that are real—that are different from the crowd—and when one does have an intuition of a kindred spirit, what’s the use of standing by conventions and waiting for an introduction? I don’t see why you and I should need to be introduced.”

In this quaint little speech there was something indescribably flattering

to the sensibilities of Wallace Firkins. Never before had he been addressed in so confiding, charmingly outspoken a fashion—least of all by a bewitching little personage with yellow curls and dancing, changeful blue eyes. Wallace was not callow—indeed, he was quite as well informed as the majority in regard to the arts of the siren race; but the present situation (as he seemed to realize that first instant) was of an entirely different character—just the inevitable recognition of one companion nature by another.

“The moment I saw you,” confided yellow-head, with a shake, “I felt that you were one of us. And you are, aren’t you?”

“You haven’t explained just who us is,” he replied, immensely pleased.

“Oh, now you’re pretending to be stupid,” she laughed reproachfully. “I mean—you’re a real person, aren’t you? You’re one of those who understand things.”

It seemed to Wallace that he had come into his own at last.

“Perhaps so,” he answered modestly.

“There,” she said. “Then I’m sure we shall get on well together. I’m so tired of all these pretentious, highly respectable idiots.”

It was a meal worthy of record. Unhindered as they were by any of the conventional preliminaries, their acquaintance had leaped at once to a level of the most engaging candor and intimacy. Yet, though he felt as if he had long known her, she was full of surprises for him, of swift turns, of alterations of humor that baffled and tantalized.

“Now tell me all about yourself,” she said. “I don’t mean the outside you—the you everybody knows; that doesn’t interest me; but the real you—what you think, and feel, and dream, and all that—Are you artistic?”

“They don’t call me so,” he admitted, somewhat reluctantly. He was afraid that she expected more of him than he would be able to live up to.

“*They*—always *they*!” she chided. “What do I care what they call you? What I asked was, *are* you?”

"I don't paint," he parried, "or do anything like that."

"Good!" she commented. "If you painted I'd almost suspect you of being a fraud—so many painters are. Most of the real artists don't carry the label. They're artists underneath—you understand—people who dare live out their own lives; people who dare be themselves. The fact that I happen to dabble with paints a little myself doesn't prove I'm an artist. The artist in me, if it's there at all, goes deeper than that."

Firkins experienced a sweet gratification in having met someone, after all these years, who understood him—better, even, for that matter, than he had understood himself. He perceived clearly now what he had only dimly guessed before: that it was a desire for something of this sort—to be himself—to be different—that had set him off from his associates behind the counter, and in the boarding-house—driven him, for this one precious fortnight, to claim a rich, full life of his own.

"We all have our own ways of living ourselves out, don't you think?" she was going on, with a smiling earnestness that was irresistible. "For me there are two things with a meaning—violets and sunsets. One or the other; sometimes both. You shall see, if you like."

He murmured a word of gratitude.

"They've let me camp out in a rough little shack down there under the cliff," she said. "Will you come—say late in the afternoon?"

"Indeed I will," he exclaimed; then—after a hesitation—"You haven't told me your name."

"Suppose I haven't any," she said, whimsically. "Don't you hate names? They belong to the part of us that everybody knows. Don't tell me yours—at least not yet. I'm going to think up one for you that will fit. Meanwhile, until you find a better one, you might call me Yvette—or Mélisande, perhaps—I'm so fond of Maeterlinck."

She rose. "I'm running away now," she said, "because I see some of those

unspeakable people coming to this table. *Au revoir!*"

He finished his lunch dreamingly, not noticing what he put into his mouth. He did not know what to do with himself for the afternoon, and ended by doing nothing at all—idling away the hours on the veranda, staring absently out over the sea and thinking thoughts that were new to him. Wallace was not of a sentimental disposition—at least, not very much so. He had not come to Longcliff in search of a romantic adventure. Although he had derived real enjoyment from the consciousness of being looked at with interest by handsome and well-dressed young women, he had been perfectly content to seek no introductions. His vengeance was of a subtler kind. It had found its finest satisfaction in letting them see that he craved no association with them.

But all his composure was gone now. His heart was positively in a flutter. This little person who had seen straight into him with those limpid, changeful blue eyes of hers, who had understood his true self in a flash, without so much as a word of explanation on his part—there was something almost uncanny about it! But delightful! Unquestionably the most delightful sensation of his life!

He wondered who she was, and with his wondering was mingled a vague yearning to protect and shelter her. It was certain she must be lonely at a summer hotel, where so few could understand her. How she loathed them all! He loathed them, too. She had been quick to see it—so very quick, and so charmingly ready to be friends.

Wallace resolved to twine as many posies as possible into friendship's garland.

The afternoon wore slowly away, and before five he was strolling along the beach under the cliff. The waves were breaking quite beautifully, but he hardly noticed them. He espied a small, weather-beaten bungalow, half-hidden in a nest of rocks, and directed his steps toward it. The door stood partly open.

"Ah, it's you, comrade," cried a laughing voice from within. "You must wait just a minute. I'm doing up my hair."

He waited, while his fancy pictured her hands full of the light, clinging ringlets. And he caught snatches of a little tune she was humming—something pensive, almost sad, but strangely tantalizing. . . .

"Now!"

She opened the door wide, and stood before him. Wallace had a start.

She looked at him with head atilt, like a bird from some foreign shore. "Well, how do you like me this way?" she asked.

Wallace gazed at her in fascination. She was garbed in some fantastic Japanesque thing, loose and graceful, from beneath which he caught a peeping glimpse of Turkish slippers and red silk hose. One would scarcely have expected Wallace to notice so many things at once; but he did.

"In the studio," she explained airily, "I dress just in any sort of rag I like. This is my kingdom—my land of heart's desire—you know what I mean."

"I can imagine," he said, "the relief it must be to you to have a little place of your own—away from all *that*!"—he nodded significantly in the direction of the Longcliff.

"Oh, I couldn't live without this," she exclaimed. "The world—that world—is an unspeakable nightmare to me. Here at least it cannot enter. Here I claim sanctuary—with the sea out there, tumbling up at my feet, and the gulls wheeling overhead, and the sunsets—such sunsets!—every night-fall."

"These are your paintings?" said Wallace, letting his eyes wander over the fifteen or twenty water-colors pinned up here and there against the rough walls. "May I look at them?"

"Dabs," she observed lightly. "Mere records. I just paint my moods, you see. I don't pretend to picture this or that sunset—only to put down the dream it brings me—the things that are called into being by it, deep down. Perhaps that doesn't mean anything to

you; I can't explain it in words, somehow. But I'm glad to let you see my sketches. You may not understand them all—at first."

Wallace did not fully understand—at first, but he made a commendable effort. He had always been docile enough in matters of art. He passed from one to another silently—striving in desperation to come upon some comment that would sound decently subtle.

But she saved him. "I like you," she said ingenuously, "because you seem to know when not to say anything. The majority of people would think they must be appreciative; chatter about tone and values, and all that. After all, isn't silence the only sincere tribute? A real picture does not want words; it speaks its own language—and to each in his own way."

(Wallace exchanged a rapid, delightful look of understanding with her.)

"I'll tell you something about them," she offered. "Each has a story. They're like a diary, you see—my way of voicing myself. I never show them except to those who understand me best."

(Wallace thrilled to the implicit compliment, but said nothing; and she ran over some of the pages of her soul's diary with him.)

Here was the close of a perfect day; the waves had lapped the shore; the sea had been sleeping like a tired babe in the great arms of the world; that fishing-boat out there with drooping, passive sail, just touched by the fire of the sunset—that was the key to the picture.

(Wallace had known a mood like that, too, but had never had a way of expressing it so beautifully. What a resource her art must be to her, he murmured; and she replied with a long, almost reverent breath, and a slight nod of the head.)

Here was a night shutting down—lowering, inky clouds, and inky sea, with one lurid flash of crimson: that was all. A cruel day, she said. Someone had misunderstood her, had been unkind. She had not let them see how hurt she was—you learned in time to keep those things to yourself!—but she had come back to her little refuge, and

this is the way the paints had told about it!

(Wallace felt a wonderful, intense pity welling up in him, and an insatiable rage against the cruel world that had misunderstood and wounded.)

Here was the day that followed—gray mist on the waters. A blind, groping day! That white, all but shapeless spot—a little bark, adrift, without rudder. Was there no way out into the open? No blue? . . .

She seemed to be passing by the next. "I mustn't tell you about this," she said, a little nervously (it seemed to him), and with a significant shake of the head.

"Why not?" demanded Wallace, with an impulsiveness that was not at all characteristic of him. "Couldn't you trust me to understand?" He leaned very close to her, and his eyes pleaded. He noticed a rebellious little wisp of yellow across her forehead, and had a queer impulse to do something with it—he did not know what.

"It isn't that," she said, with a look that responded trustfully to his. "You are kind. You do see what I mean. You mustn't think I don't value your sympathy. But this one—I can't tell you exactly—"

Wallace made a startling discovery. "Why, it's still damp," he ejaculated. "You've only just done it!"

She looked at him like a frightened child; then dropped her eyes. A quick intuition leaped up in his brain—an intuition that brought a kind of lovely dizziness and intoxication with it.

Wallace had not the slightest intention in the world of doing what he did then. He suddenly discovered his two arms close about the adorable little creature, and his lips were pressing hers fervidly.

The next instant she freed herself and faced him accusingly.

"Don't you dare stay one minute longer," she cried. "Oh, for shame—that you should spoil everything like that! I thought I could trust you—that you would understand!"

Wallace was overcome with mortification. He had no defense to

make. There was nothing for him to say.

"I'm—I'm ever so sorry," he blurted out weakly. "I didn't mean to, really."

"There's no need to apologize," she said, in a voice of the most poignant disillusion. "This must be the end. Goodbye."

Desperation seized him. He could not, must not, let this be the end. He must have a chance to redeem himself.

"I'll go," he said humbly. "But won't you try to forgive me? Won't you try?"

A painful second elapsed, while she kept her eyes riveted to the floor. The look she gave him, when she raised them at last, was inscrutable.

"I'll try," she whispered hoarsely. "But I don't know whether I can—you've struck so deep!"

Wallace dropped his head in shame.

"You must wait," she told him wanly. "I am not sure of myself yet. I must let it paint itself out. I'll send you word when I can see my way. Goodbye."

Wallace Firkins returned to the Longcliff in a most miserable state of mind. He had no one but himself to curse. What could have possessed him—he asked himself a thousand times in vain—to commit that mad, untimely, irretrievable act? No sooner had he discovered a true and lovely friendship than he must go and stab it to the heart! Wallace lay that night in the dungeon of Giant Despair.

And the next day came, and no word. She passed him once on the veranda. He half rose to his feet, hoping against hope that she would let him speak; but no; with a slight, almost imperceptible gesture she motioned him away.

And the next day came. And about half-past eight in the morning, as he was just making ready to shave, the bell-boy left a parcel at his door. It was something light and flexible—the size of a page from the heart's diary. He looked at it impotently for as much as ten seconds, then cut the delicate cord that bound it and undid the wrappings.

A strange, wild mood, certainly, was

the one which had depicted itself here—a little mystical, maybe. The world would doubtless have called it by some slighting term, but the world is blind and dull of perception. There were violets in the foreground; and all the leaves and all the flowers were flat and broken and withered. And behind, a cloud-curtained sunset—a spot of pale rose above a dark sea—but there, highest of all—look!—a strip of rainbow! Wallace's heart gave an exultant throb! He understood. Her hopes, her expectations of him had been cruelly shattered; yet he need not despair. High in the west there was the rainbow! What an exquisite and touching way of letting him into the very heart of the situation! No words! No explanations! Only a dream—a token—a sign—meaningless, save for him!

He wanted to fly to her at once—but had she given him permission? He dared not presume too much. Had she meant anything more than merely to keep him from despair, while she fought out her battle alone? He resolved to write her. He would thank her; he would show her that she had not misjudged his understanding; and he would ask to be let come to her once more.

It was already lunch time when, after many unsatisfactory attempts, he finally signed himself the devoted "comrade" of Yvette, and folded the note. She would be down there in the dining-room now; he was sure of it, for he had noticed that she was very regular about her meals. Well, he would steal down to her little bungalow under the cliff and slip the note under her door. He could get his luncheon later; he was not at all hungry.

As he drew near unto the rock-bound habitation of the Lorelei, an increasing shyness came upon him. He began to feel guilty—a trespasser in forbidden purlieus. Instinctively he kept as close as possible under the shelter of the cliff; and thus, still out of sight of the door, he came within a few yards' distance. Fumbling nervously in his pocket, he drew out an envelope. No, that was the wrong one. He thrust it

back furtively, and held Yvette's in his hand.

It was just at this moment that he heard a door open and a feminine voice, which he did not recognize, came distinctly to his ears. He crouched down.

"Well, I'm sorry you're so unreasonable about it, Minnie; but I suppose there's no use arguing with you any more."

"I'm afraid not, Mrs. Haskell," answered the voice he had dreamed of for two whole days. "After all, I'm only asking for one more week."

Wallace had a sudden, inexplicable sensation of tottering on the brink of some dreadful abyss.

"Ah, but if you could only see the children, Minnie," protested the first voice. "Their frocks are in such a state; and Elisabeth refuses downright to let cook dress her, and says she won't be good again until her Minnie comes back."

The tone became ingratiating. "Ah, why do you insist on staying here, Minnie, and living in this perfectly absurd and freakish way? Haven't we treated you well? Don't we give you an hour a day for your art?" There was a silence. "Is it the wages, then?"

"No, Mrs. Haskell, it isn't that. It's—it's something in quite another line."

A communicative look must have passed between them, for suddenly the first voice took on a tone of flattered intuition.

"Oh—h!— Well, now I begin to understand. Why, Minnie, Minnie, what a sly little minx you are, to be sure!"

A roguish laugh served for Minnie's only answer.

"And to judge by that, you're succeeding. Tell me frankly, Minnie. You know you can trust me."

"Leave me my week!" rippled Minnie wheedlingly.

Wallace heard the sound of a kiss (imagine wanting to kiss *her!*), and then:

"Of course you shall have it, child, if that's the reason. I am sure I should be glad to see you well married; and

with your talents and cleverness I don't see why it's impossible. If anybody could carry it through, it's you, my dear— Well, till next week then. Now, don't fail me—and the best of luck to you!"

There was a swish of skirts down the path and Wallace, flat against his boulder, espied a large, well-dressed woman picking her way along the beach toward the cliff steps. He had thrust the envelope out of sight—humiliating evidence of an episode in his past.

A *governess!* . . . A magnificent, Olympian rage surged up in Wallace's bosom at the thought. Trick him, would she—the cat! Practise a base, vulgar deception upon him! Ha, ha! a pretty game!—he laughed bitterly. A very pretty game! It was good that he had found out in time.

He would have preferred (I do not know why) to withdraw from his position unperceived; but, as ill-luck would have it, at the very second when he concluded it safe to move (for there was a dead silence and he thought she must have reëntered the house), out she tripped—and spied him. Her face lighted with momentary greeting; then became gently reproachful.

"You should not have come yet," she said. "I did not mean my little message that way. I am still in the—"

She seemed just then to notice for the first time the expression on Wallace's face.

"Why!" she cried. "Whatever can be the matter?"

She might well ask; for instead of the repentant "comrade," come to sue for mercy, she looked upon the very presence of insulted majesty. Aware of the justice of his indignation, Wallace Firkins made no effort to check it.

"The matter!" he retorted, superbly— "What is the matter? Oh—nothing—nothing, I assure you—*Minnie!*" (Oh, the scorn he managed to inject into that simple word!) "It so happened that your mistress saved me from a troublesome little situation; that's all!"

The shameless creature did not appear quite so stricken by these tidings

as he had expected. She drew herself back a little and looked at him brazenly.

"Oh!" she said. "Eavesdropping, eh? I appreciate the compliment."

Wallace rose to the taunt with that noble fearlessness virtue always gives.

"I was doing no such a thing," he retaliated. "I was just there by accident. I had come to leave something."

She smiled skeptically, and shrugged her shoulders. But Wallace had the evidence! His hand dived ferociously into his pocket; he caught forth something white and shook it under her eyes.

"Look at that!" he ordered, glowering at her like an executioner.

But the same instant his hand grew limp. She snatched the letter from him and stared at it; then read the address aloud—"Mr. Wallace Firkins—Care Broadway Haberdasher's Shop—Buffalo—"

Her eyes glittered like hard gems. "Ah," she commented cuttingly. "You were bringing me this? So thoughtful!"

For an instant Wallace had lost his breath. "It's a mistake," he gasped. "I made a mistake. Give it back." He held out a begging hand.

"Oh," she replied, coolly, "don't you want to leave it with me for a souvenir? I should like to show it to some of my friends. They will be so interested to hear *all about you.*"

Her innuendo was masterly. Wallace pleaded.

"Please give it back, ma'am! I'm—I'm going to leave tonight."

She handed it to him. "Suit yourself," she said indifferently. "Stay as long as you like. But please don't keep me here talking to you any longer, or it will be past lunch time."

In an unbroken, pregnant silence they made their way up to the hotel, to separate—for the last time—at the door of the dining-room. With a little laugh, not entirely unfriendly, she held out her hand and he took it automatically.

"My compliments to your friends in Buffalo," she said.

"Give my love to the children," he replied, rather grimly.

That noon their tables were far apart.

THE GHOSTS

By Elizabeth Daly

"**I** LOST myself, as usual, coming from the station," said my guest, pausing between sips of iced tea.

"Not again?" I cried. "Why, you have made that trip twenty times!"

"But always with your assistance—or your husband's," she answered. "I never had to pay attention before."

"It couldn't well be more direct," observed the gentleman mentioned. "Take the only possible car and get out at Mountain street."

"Yes," she objected, "but I'm always confused by the crowds at the station; and I always hate to ask the conductor; and I never can see the signs on the street corners; and when I do ask, the conductor forgets to tell me. This time I waited till I saw a corner that looked familiar, and then I walked miles, and finally I had to take another car back again, and ask abjectly at every square. When I finally got here I was ready to drop. I'd not only got out a square too soon, but when I did, I walked north instead of south."

"It seems incredible!" I exclaimed. "Have you no sense of direction?"

"None at all. I can walk in the wrong way on a road that I've traversed all my life, and never notice that anything is wrong until I reach the village and see that it isn't mine."

My husband came to get a second glass of tea, remarking as he did so, "Rather inconvenient, I should think."

"Extremely," replied Ethel. "And sometimes worse, I often think—" and she stirred her tea thoughtfully—"it was that very lack in me that made possible my strange experience last winter."

"Which one?" I inquired; for Ethel is favored beyond the lot of average mortals with extraordinary adventure.

"One you've never heard. One I've never told."

"Then tell it now."

She gazed out of the window, a look of indecision on her face, and objected. "It isn't funny; it isn't even agreeable."

"Then by all means let's have it," urged my husband. "It is too hot to be amused."

And she agreed to do so; but it was some moments before she commenced, in a hesitating way.

"I went one night last Winter to dine and sleep with the Caldwells, in New York. You used to know her—she was Carrie Spencer. She has married a very nice fellow, a lawyer with plenty of money, and they live in a big, new apartment house—the kind with an imposing entrance and a turning door, and every possible convenience except space. Her place is not absolutely crowded, though, being very well arranged. I've stayed there more than once—they're most hospitable."

"Well, we dined. I don't remember who the other people were. And after they had all gone, Carrie and Mr. Caldwell and I talked a few minutes, and then went to our rooms. They go to bed very early on account of riding in the park at eight, or some unnatural custom of the sort. Or it may be roller skating; I've forgotten."

"I took a few books with me, as I had no hope of sleep for hours, it being only a quarter to eight. I was always a night owl, you know—oh, you go to bed early too, don't you? Well, I've often told you what I think of it. I took

my books, and I went into the guest room. My own suburban apartment is rather larger than the average, so this one—about the size of a convenient pantry—makes me feel monastic. It is filled to overflowing with a beautiful Louis Quinze four-poster with a brocade roof, but no curtains; a carved dresser; and a chair. Behind the head board, and behind my head as I lie, is a large window looking out on an inner court. The charming old furniture gives no effect whatever of age in that tiny modern room; an electric bell-button, six inches from the pillow, seems to neutralize the power of the bed and the dresser and the chair.

"I piled my things on the last-named piece of furniture, and on the foot of the bed, and turned on all the lights and retired with my books. But they did not interest me, I was not in the mood for reading; besides, it was a chilly night and I was getting very cold. So rather irritably I piled the volumes on the floor, which was the only place for them, turned off all the lights without getting up, and mentally applauding the luxuries of the modern apartment house, settled myself to think. Not to sleep—it wasn't much after eleven, and I had had black coffee for dinner.

"Have you ever lain in the dark and gradually lost all sense of direction? I mean, have you found yourself apparently facing in an entirely different way and looking for windows and doors in places where you know perfectly that you will not find them? In other words, has the room you were lying in ever shifted and become one entirely different, and has the impression grown so strong that you were almost tempted to get up and persuade yourself that you are wrong? I find that a great many people have had the sensation, but no one appears to have it quite so strongly as I. With others it seems transitory, a thing that passes quickly and is forgotten; with me it is all so vivid and powerful that I sometimes find it impossible, without tangible proof, to persuade myself out of the conviction. However, with others as

with me, the change always takes place to another perfectly familiar room—one often slept in and clearly remembered. I have more than once been taken back in this way to my old nursery; I could almost see the crib opposite with a sleeping infant brother in it, the big bureau and the toy-closet door. Sometimes I am in my suite in college, and the very feel of the box-couch, rather uneven and damaged in the springs, comes back again. Sometimes I have fancied myself in the little twin bed that I occupied at boarding-school, and I have been almost persuaded that if I put out my hand I should touch the other little bed, twelve inches away, wherein my roommate slept so soundly with a photograph of her favorite actor under the pillow. All this, of course, can happen only in perfect darkness, and the whole illusion goes the moment one catches the dim outline of a veritable window, or the line of light under a door.

"The phenomenon has always amused me, and I have cultivated it to such an extent as to be able to lie for an hour constructing the whole detail of the place where I fancy I am, and getting once more the very sense of the life I lived there. But accustomed as I was to it, I was somewhat surprised, on this particular night, to feel it coming—the well-known sensation of being completely turned around, of facing the wrong way. The cubicle I occupied was so very small, there did not seem much room for losing one's idea of the position of things. Besides, I could hear the clang of the electric cars on the avenue and the soft clatter of hoofs and the roll of wheels on asphalt; but in spite of all these things my bed seemed to be turned north instead of west, and I could swear that I perceived the faint outline of two small windows on my left. Moreover, the place had widened, and the ceiling had lowered. I suddenly felt a supreme conviction that I was in my old double wooden bed, painted pea-green, with strawberries on the head and foot-boards, in my great-aunt's house in the country.

"I smiled at the vividness of the illusion, but somehow I did not find it as amusing as usual. My associations with the room I fancied myself in were not altogether agreeable. It is one that I remember as far as I can remember at all; it has been mine for twenty years, and is on the second floor of that sad, dreamy, decaying house, which stands among majestic trees a little way back from the country road, and reminds me of the 'Haunted House' of Hood's verses. It was built a hundred years ago by my great-grandfather, and his name is on the brass door-plate. Fifty years since it was gay with company, and its gardens blossomed all summer long, and in winter great fires roared in its wide chimneys. Ladies in hoops practised at archery on the terraces in those days—their tall bows and arrows have hung for half a century in the dusty lower hall. Later, there was a croquet-ground, resounding with laughter and quarrelings—I myself from my earliest years played on that adored spot, and rebelled fiercely when tennis came in and ousted the arches and the striped balls, each one of which I loved like a brother; when I was a child the house was still merry, voices sounded loud through the rooms, gay dresses showed on the pillared veranda. Young and old gathered there; it saw the vicissitudes of dozens of families. I know every inch of its hundred acres by heart, and can smell at this very instant the paintey fragrance of the porch.

"I don't care about going back now. I do go every summer, and sleep in my own room with the pea-green furniture, and the two tiny windows, and the flowery matting on the floor. But my great-aunt lives there all alone; she is old, and sleeps on the ground floor. Most of the house is shut up—the kitchen wing is entirely disused. When I go up to bed I brave the terror of moldy darkness, black, gaping doorways, silence like the grave except for the scurrying of squirrels in the wall. My lamp casts a miserable glimmer about me, and extraordinary shadow-shapes start up as I advance. Every

window is fastened close, and has been for years, except in my room, where the long nails have been removed by my own efforts and the sash propped up with a stick. Mine is the only bed that has been made up since I don't know when; mine the only room that is not as if dead and smothered in dust.

"So you can imagine that the sensation of feeling myself back in that very room, alone with the darkness, was not a particularly agreeable one. I lay for a few minutes thinking how odd it was that the nervous terror which I had so often felt before dropping to sleep on that deserted second floor should return by association of ideas, and assail me now and here, in this populous apartment house, on a noisy avenue in New York. And as I thought, I marveled still more, for the air seemed oppressive with the heat of a summer night, and with the closeness of long shut up places. Was not this rather too much of a strain to put upon one's imagination? I was tempted to break the spell, when of a sudden I was sensible of a coldness from head to foot, the damp chill of fear.

"I lay dry-mouthed, wondering what had happened to cause my terror, for in the suddenness of its coming it had for a moment bewildered me; and then I knew that what I feared centred itself in a distant, peculiar and only once repeated cry, but one which I had instantaneously recognized. It was the long-drawn, inexpressibly mournful tone of a peacock, coming from somewhere far off—from the hill, I supposed, behind the barn. I lay and listened, trying to swallow, trying to breathe between the thumpings of my heart. There had been peacocks on the old place, a whole flock of them. That sound could not be mistaken. Whatever else I was deceived in, I was sure about that. Then where was I? In the city, in the place where I had lain down half an hour before? A moth flapped crazily against the ceiling, fluttered down and touched my hand with its dusty wings. It was midsummer, and I was in my own room on the

second floor of the deserted country seat.

"This is all very interesting, I thought, pulling my wits together, but I can't allow my imagination to be quite so illogical. If that is a peacock, I'm a little mixed in my chronology. I know perfectly well that the last peacock died at least fifteen years ago.

"Then my heart thumped no more—it stood still. For another well-remembered sound reached me—the muffled stamping of horses in the empty and half-ruined barn.

"I lay motionless, wondering what freak of sickly fancy I was the victim of. It would have been bad enough to find myself back in the old house on a midsummer night, on that abandoned upper floor—to listen as I had so often done to the creakings of the warped stairs, to wonder what exit I should choose in case some sudden noise or fancied apparition terrified me beyond endurance; to remember that there was no one within call, no one with me there except an old and feeble woman, herself asleep downstairs in her distant room. But to be translated there and find dead sounds alive again—to hear the voices and movements of creatures long since vanished from mortal existence—it must be a nightmare, nothing more.

"I longed with unutterable longing for the clatter of hoofs on asphalt, the gong of an electric car; I strained my eyes upward to make out the brocaded roof of the Louis Quinze bed. It was of no use. In vain now to try to break the spell; I had come here by some obscure path that I could never find again, and there was no way of getting back.

"Suddenly there came to me the strange idea that perhaps I really was still in the country visiting my great-aunt, and that everything that had happened during the four months intervening was nothing itself but a dream. I had had dreams almost as vivid before—awakenings almost as confusing. What if—but no, it would not do. I had not been asleep. The events of this very evening were too real.

"I wondered whether the hall looked as usual; whether the little kerosene lamp was in its place on the dresser. I would get up and look. Nothing could be worse than this.

"The peacock's cry sounded again, faint and far away. As a child I had always likened it to the chanted words 'Way off! Way off! Way off!' intoned on three notes, one for the first word, two for the second. Asad and not unmusical cry. The peacocks had another, a raucous and tuneless note, for common use in the daytime. This rarer one they seemed to reserve for solitude and the watches of the night. Well, there had been no peacocks for fifteen years—let me remember that. Meanwhile I must get up and open the door into the hall. I did so, my bare feet touching the cool matting shrinkingly, and peered stealthily into the lighted space. I tried hard to repress my breathing—I wanted to make no sound. There was the hall, bare as usual, with its cherry dresser on which stood the lamp, and its row of open doorways. The well of the stairs was pitch dark. Somehow, it did not feel like the empty house that I had known for so many years. I could see little in the gloom, but the pile of broken furniture in one corner was gone, and there was no suffocating odor of dust, and the picture that had stood since my childhood with cracked glass, facing the wall, now hung mended and fresh in its old place near the stairs. The look of ruin and decay had left the place; the peeling wallpaper had disappeared, the ragged matting; all was clean and orderly, and in good repair, and the dresser looked positively new. I stepped forward gingerly, afraid somehow of waking those who might be sleeping in the rooms with the open doors. Who were they?

"In a sudden panic I bounded forward and dashed down those rickety stairs, making such an uproar of creakings and poundings as had not been heard there in many a day, and panting aloud to ease my bursting heart. Reaching the lower hall, which was dimly lighted by a hanging lamp, I flew on to the front

door and tumbled desperately with the key. It was a large key and hard to turn, besides being secured for the night with a wire pin; and as I struggled with it, giving forth now and then an abject and stifled sob, I heard in the rear of the house the sound of footsteps. They were light, slow and reluctant; first I thought, breathing freer, that they were those of my aunt, who, roused by my incredible dash downstairs, was coming feebly out of her bedroom to inquire and be reassured. But the steps, light and slow, were not those of an old person, and they did not proceed from her own room. They were coming from the disused side of the house, through the sitting-room, and in a few moments would be in the hall itself.

"I turned the key, wrenched at the brass knob, and dragged open the door. A flood of fresh, flower-scented air greeted me. Pulling the door shut behind me, I stood in my night-dress on the wide porch, in a stream of brilliant moonlight, and gazed wildly across the peaceful lawn. But where was the row of comfortable little cottages that had stood across the road? And why did the rolling meadows opposite seem so strangely clear to view? There were no houses, no screen of bushes and dense branches. It was all free rolling meadowland, looking like a scene in a panorama in the bright light of the moon.

"I turned my head and surveyed the front of the house itself; and all at once, gazing at me out of the sitting-room window, and pressed close up to the small, square panes, I saw a face.

"Motionless, we stared at each other. It was a woman, and she was dressed, like me, in a white, loose gown, and her hair hung about her shoulders. Her skin was like clay. Her eyes, cavernous and wild, seemed to devour me. There was a look in them that for a moment, in the confusion of my own soul, I did not understand. Then I saw that it was fear—fear as sickening as that which seemed turning me to stone as I stood. Did she know me, I have often wondered, or was hers pure

terror of a white-draped figure standing alone on the moonlit veranda? She almost seemed to recognize me. I knew her—or at least knew who she had been. For her picture, an almost effaced daguerreotype, was kept with many others in a little cabinet in the parlor. I did not know her name—she was not important, or perhaps even interesting; but the fact that I was sure of was that she had been dead for many years.

"As we gazed, the far, mournful cry of the peacock reached me again, and suddenly the tension seemed to lessen. Darkness stole up around me, as it had once before—once when I fainted on a railway journey, after a long fast. I did not care; I felt that if I were fainting at least I was leaving that place and that time, although the dreadful face hanging in the midst of the blackness glared at me still. A moment of bewilderment, and then I knew, somehow, that I was lying again in the tiny guest-room with the antique furniture. I put out my hand, touched with a thrill of joy the electric button beside the pillow, and in an instant the room was flooded with light—the face was gone."

Ethel paused so long here that I exchanged a glance with my husband, and prepared to speak myself. I could think of nothing apt to say, and should have infallibly committed myself to some hopeless banality, when she continued:

"I've always half wondered, you know, which was real and which was the ghost. She was quite as frightened as I was, and after all the surroundings were hers—they didn't belong to my day."

"But in that case," objected my husband, "where are we, and our time, in the scheme of things?"

"You don't suppose that we are the dream, and that the person and place you saw are the realities?" I added.

"Well—I sometimes almost do," she answered. "Or else nothing passes at all—it all goes on—in different planes, you know."

Our faces must have discouraged her, and moreover my husband muttered "Planes!" with an intonation

that I feared might offend; so she shrugged the matter away and got up to bring back her tumbler and spoon. As she gave them up to her host, she observed, glancing at us both with a somewhat apologetic air:

"I must say, however, that I don't look forward with any enthusiasm to my annual visit to the old house this

summer. And I confess that since my experience I have never encouraged the confusion of thought that used to amuse me so much when I lay awake. No— I find that when I begin to lose the sense of where I am, I sit up in bed and readjust myself by looking earnestly at the line of light under the door."



LONG DISTANCE

A MONOLOGUE

By Blanche Goodman

HELLO! Hello! Speak louder please. . . .
 Hello! is that you, Nell?
 Yes, this is Grace—speak louder, dear—
 One simply has to yell.
 What's that? How am I? Oh, just fine;
 I called you up tonight
 To tell you something that I really
 Couldn't wait to write.
 Hello! you say you didn't catch
 Exactly what I said?
 Well, goodness sakes, I'm screaming
 Loud enough to wake the dead.
 You say my voice sounds clearer now?
 All right. Now promise, Nell,
 You won't repeat this to a soul—
 I'd die if you would tell. . . .
 Hello! Hello! Yes, yes, I'm here!
 Well, isn't this provoking!
 I think the central on this line
 Deserves a thorough poking.
 You say she'll hear me? Horrid thing!
 I don't care if she does.
 I've not a doubt it's just for spite
 She makes this wire buzz.
 What's that she said? "*Time's up!*" And here
 I haven't told what I
 Rang up to tell! I'll write tonight—
 Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye!

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

By Christian Reid

WITH hat drawn down over frowning brows, and lips so closely compressed that his naturally frank and pleasant countenance was hardly recognizable Guy Stannard mounted the steps and rang the bell of a fine old house, with Corinthian columns, which stood on the shade-arched street of a famous Southern city. When the door opened in response to his impatient summons he said abruptly:

"How are you, Jasper? Is Miss Harcourt at home?"

The servant to whom he spoke—an erect, gray-haired old negro—looked at him with surprise, for the tone of the question, as well as that of the careless salutation to himself, told him that something was very much amiss with the usually debonair speaker. But he answered immediately, with the air of one who is too well-bred to violate conventionalities:

"I'm very well, thank you, Mr. Guy, and glad to see you back, sah. Yes, Miss Lucia came downstairs a few minutes ago, and went out on the gallery. I'll let her know—"

"Never mind, I'll go to her myself," the young man interrupted. He turned as he spoke, moved across the wide hall, and, with the familiarity of one who needed no direction, passed through the long, dim drawing-room, and came out on a vine-screened veranda which overlooked a garden, its flower-beds glowing with color in the spring sunshine.

Wicker chairs and tables were scattered about in this pleasant place, and a gay hammock swung at one end, in which, in the midst of a swirl of filmy

draperies, with a pile of cushions at her back, and a book in her hand, a graceful woman was reclining. She was still a young woman, yet no one would have been inclined to speak of Lucia Harcourt as a girl. It was not only that there was a note of maturity in her appearance, which showed that she had left the period of girlhood behind, but there was also quite unmistakably the sign of that experience of life, of its depths of sorrow and tragedy, which takes a soul forever out of the ignorance of light-hearted youth. She lifted a pair of beautiful dark eyes, and her lips parted in a charming smile of pleasure and welcome when the tall, lithe figure stepped into view through the window of the drawing-room.

"Guy!" she exclaimed, starting up from her cushions. "My dear boy, I am so glad to see you! When did you get back?"

"Yesterday," the boy—he was hardly more—told her, as he sat down by the hammock. "We had a very pleasant voyage," he went on, as if anticipating inquiries. "Dick is greatly improved by his stay abroad, and I was tremendously glad to get home again until"—the voice changed a little—"until today."

Miss Harcourt's ear was not less quick than that of her old servant, and she knew at once that something was wrong—very wrong—with Guy Stannard when he spoke like that. She glanced quickly and keenly at his overcast face.

"And what is the matter today," she asked, "that you are not glad to be back? I should think that Flora—"

"It is Flora herself that is the mat-

ter," he interrupted. "Have you seen or heard anything of her lately?"

"I haven't seen very much of her," Miss Harcourt answered. "She moves in a younger, gayer set than I do, you know, and so—"

"Oh, no doubt she has taken care not to come near you," he again interrupted bitterly. "She would at least have the grace to be ashamed to look you in the face."

Miss Harcourt rose now, not only from her cushions, but from the hammock as well. For plainly the matter was serious, and needed to be met with mind and body alert. She sat down in a chair before the young man and regarded him closely.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Why should Flora be ashamed to look me in the face?"

He hesitated a moment before answering. Then, with the same abruptness of tone and manner—

"Because," he replied, "she has been flirting—bah! that isn't the word for it at all! Because she is infatuated with Philip Darrell, and ready to marry him."

"Guy!" The word was hardly more than a gasp of amazement and incredulity. Miss Harcourt leaned forward, her slender hands tightening their grip on the arms of the chair in which she sat, until the knuckles stood out white and tense. "It is impossible!" she said. "You can't mean that he—"

"Yes," Guy burst out, as she paused, "I mean that he has not only had the audacity to return here, where he was tried for his life, and acquitted by a gross miscarriage of justice, but that he has dared to interfere with a Stannard again! You know what he is, how attractive to foolish women—"

She nodded. Her lips seemed stiff as she said, "I know. He can be very attractive when he—likes."

"Well, he has liked, as far as Flora is concerned. I am told that of late they have been inseparable. Think what a home-coming it is for me, Lucia! To have gone away, to help one brother regain his health, and return to find that the girl to whom I am

engaged has been accepting the attentions of the murderer of another!"

"My poor boy!" Lucia Harcourt put out her hand and laid it on his with a quick gesture of sympathy.

"Perhaps it isn't true," she suggested. "One hears so many things that are not true."

"This is true," he assured her grimly. "I went to Flora and she denied nothing. She has a right to know whom she pleases. Philip Darrell is the most interesting man she has ever met, the enmity of the Stannards is nothing to her, and if I want to play the tyrant and be disagreeable our engagement had better be considered at an end."

"How shameful!" Miss Harcourt's musical voice vibrated with an indignation for which words seemed poor vehicles of expression. "How incredibly shameful—both in her and in him!"

Guy Stannard looked at her with angry surprise.

"How could anything be incredibly shameful in him?" he demanded. "What law of God or man, what respect for decency, or fear of consequences, has ever restrained him from doing anything he wanted to do? Everyone knows how insolently daring he can be. But by heaven"—the steel-gray eyes blazed under their bent brows—"he dares too much when he crosses the path of another Stannard! I would have shot him like a dog when he killed Ralph if I had been here. But I was at college, you know, and before I could reach home he was in the hands of the law."

His listener shivered as if from cold. "I remember," she said faintly.

"Then when he was acquitted," the young man went on, "he seemed so wrecked in reputation and fortune that one was willing scornfully to let him go. It was said that he would never return, that he would bury himself somewhere in the wilds of the West. But now he is back with restored fortune, and, supported by the sympathy of a large part of the community, is attempting to take up his old leadership

in politics and society. This is audacious enough, but when he singles out Flora—*my* Flora—for his attentions, it is too much! If she promises to marry him, I shall kill him—as I should have killed him long ago—so help me God!”

That it was no idle threat, no empty oath, Lucia Harcourt knew well. In this Southern city—stronghold of the customs and traditions of the old South, in which men held their lives of infinitely less value than their honor—the cause of offense was great enough to make it almost obligatory, and there was no manner of doubt that public sentiment would sustain Guy Stannard if he shot down, “like a dog,” as he had said, the man who, having slain his brother, now robbed him of his promised wife. But as she gazed at the young face before her, she seemed to see another which was recalled by its striking likeness—the face of a man who had also sworn to kill Philip Darrell, and who had gone forth to be killed by him.

“Guy,” she whispered, “you wouldn’t do anything so terrible!—you wouldn’t bring more blood-guiltiness on—”

She did not say on whom, for Guy stopped her, speaking with a determination impossible to mistake.

“I shall surely do it,” he said. “I shall surely kill him, and feel that I am fulfilling a duty in killing him—not only for crossing my path and taking Flora from me, but for making you a widow before you were a wife.”

“Oh, for God’s sake,” she breathed, “don’t think of me!”

“I have always thought of you,” he told her, “always wanted to kill him for what he did to you. Do you think I have not realized what he made of your life, the loneliness and sadness to which he doomed you in the very flower of your youth and beauty?”

She tried to speak but could not, and the stern tones continued:

“But retribution will come to him, in one way or another. Either I shall shoot him, or if, as with poor Ralph, he is quicker with his trigger than I am, he will not find another jury that

will acquit him. So, by one or the other means, Flora will be saved from him and you will be avenged.”

“Guy,” she cried in wild appeal, “I beg, I pray you—”

But he rose as if to escape what he could not heed.

“It is useless to try to change my resolution,” he said. “Only one thing can change it. That is for Flora to promise to have nothing more to do with him. You may tell her so if you see her.”

Then he wrung the hand that vainly tried to detain him and went away.

How long it was after this before another visitor came to her Lucia Harcourt hardly knew. It might have been only minutes, or again it might have been hours, that she sat staring at the gay flower-beds in the sunshine until there was a rapid tap of French heels on the parquered floor of the drawing-room, followed by a rustle of silken skirts, as a girl stepped through the open window to the veranda—a girl whose blonde prettiness was accentuated by all that is most modern in appearance and manner.

“Oh, you dear thing, I am so glad to find you here—and alone!” she cried, rushing up to Miss Harcourt and embracing her. “For I’m dreadfully worried, and you are the only person who can help me.”

“Sit down,” said Lucia briefly, pointing to the chair opposite her own. Then, as the girl obeyed, she looked at the piquant face under its cloud of fair hair, with the mingling of wonder and exasperation with which women are so often familiar. It was for this soulless piece of painted flesh that men were ready to kill and even to be killed!

“I have just heard,” she said coldly, “that you have made trouble—desperate trouble—for others, Flora, and I am glad to learn that you share it a little.”

“Now why,” Flora Wynne asked, pouting in a manner which her admirers would have considered adorable, “should you be glad that I am in

trouble? I call that *very* unkind. But I suppose Guy has been here."

"Yes, Guy has been here. Are you not ashamed of the manner in which you have treated him?"

"Why should I be ashamed?"—in a key of injured indignation. "Haven't I a right to know and to—er—enjoy the society of whom I please?"

"What nonsense that is!" said Miss Harcourt severely. "You are certainly aware that you have nothing of the kind. When you promised to marry Guy Stannard you must have understood that you debarred yourself from knowing and enjoying the society of the man who had killed his brother."

"But I hadn't met him then—I mean the man," the girl returned naïvely. "If I had, I shouldn't have promised to marry Guy. For he is awfully fascinating, Philip Darrell—quite the most fascinating man I ever knew in my life!"

Lucia Harcourt dropped her eyes, probably because she felt the quick gleam that leaped into them. When she looked up again after a moment she was plainly holding herself under strong control.

"Flora," she said gravely, "you are not a child, and I can't believe that you are entirely heartless. Having engaged yourself to Guy you are bound in honor—"

"Oh, no, I'm not," Flora interrupted. "I don't consider myself bound in honor a moment longer than I want to be. I've told Guy that our engagement had better be considered at an end. I can't stand being dictated to as to whom I shall know."

"This," Lucia told her, "is worse than childishness—it is insincerity. You are not breaking your engagement to Guy because you object to being dictated to—you know that any man would have a right to dictate in such a case—but because you are foolish enough to believe that you can marry Philip Darrell."

"Foolish, indeed!" Miss Wynne flushed angrily. "There is nothing foolish about it. I *can* marry him if—I like, and I've come for the special

purpose of asking you to let Guy know that there isn't the least use in making any further effort to prevent my doing so."

Miss Harcourt swept her with a glance which was as sarcastic as it was keen.

"Before trying to employ me to keep Guy quiet, hadn't you better be quite sure of your ground?" she asked. "Philip Darrell is rather notorious for—"

"Paying attentions which mean nothing," the other took up her speech sharply. "I know that very well. He has amused himself with a great many women, but he isn't amusing himself with me. I'm quite sure of it."

"How are you sure? Has he asked you to marry him?"

The flush deepened on the girl's face.

"Not yet," she confessed. "But he will. I'm perfectly confident that he will as soon as he hears that my engagement is broken. Of course he hesitated while—er—"

"I see that you are kind enough to give him credit for some faint consideration of things which haven't restrained you," Miss Harcourt remarked scornfully. Then her manner changed, as she leaned forward and laid her hand on the girl's rounded arm in its long glove.

"Flora," she said earnestly, "are you indeed so foolish as to think that you can disavow your obligation so easily? Life doesn't deal with us like that. We can't put our actions behind us and be done with them, whenever we like. There are always consequences to be faced. Is it possible that you don't know what the consequences will be in this case?"

There was a shade of apprehension now in the eyes of baby-blue which met her own.

"I suppose Guy will make himself disagreeable and people will talk, but I don't care," the girl replied.

"Will you care," the deep, grave voice went on, "if you are the cause of one of these men killing the other? For that is what will come to pass. You know how the Stannards regard

Philip Darrell—you know that the least thing will bring on the shedding of more blood—and yet you run the terrible risk of provoking rivalry between men who are already sworn enemies. Have you no idea what a fearful thing it would be to have the blood of a man on your conscience and your soul? I warn you solemnly that if you go on you will have it. Only a little while ago, sitting where you are sitting now, Guy Stannard swore that if you promise to marry Philip Darrell he will kill him. *Flora, the Stannards keep such oaths.*

Flora's eyes now flashed vindictively.

"Not always," she returned. "Ralph Stannard swore the same thing, didn't he? Well—Philip Darrell can take care of himself again." She flung the last words in a tone of defiance at the pale woman who regarded her with something which was hardly less than horror.

"You know what that means," the latter said. "You know that it will mean making him a second time a murderer—"

"He wasn't a murderer the first time," the girl broke in. "Everybody—except, of course, the Stannards and their friends—believed that he killed Ralph Stannard in self-defense. Even you," she challenged boldly, "can't deny it!"

Miss Harcourt made no effort to deny it. She thrust the question, as it were, aside.

"We are not talking of the past, but of the future," she said. "For Philip Darrell to 'take care of himself' a second time can only mean the ending of Guy's young life—Guy, who has loved you so long and so well, and whom a short time ago you thought you loved."

"I don't think so now! And if he is killed it will be his own fault. How *dare* he try to terrorize me! I *won't* give up Philip Darrell!"

Lucia Harcourt leaned forward again, and there was an expression on her face, and in her dark eyes, which awed even the light and shallow soul of the girl before her.

"You will be forced to give him up—

in one way or another," she said, echoing words which lingered in her memory. "Guy will kill him, or he will kill Guy—it must be one or the other, you know—and if you care nothing for the boy who has been your lover all his life, perhaps you may consider Philip Darrell who could never hope to be acquitted for killing another Stannard."

There followed a moment, in which the girl stared at the speaker in silence. For at last she recognized the situation; at last understood the strength of the forces she had roused and which she had no power to control. Then fury overwhelmed her—the fury of the selfish nature confronted by something which even selfishness cannot override. She sprang to her feet.

"I don't care what comes of it. I won't be coerced into doing what I don't want to do!" she cried. "That is my last word, and you may tell Guy so whenever you see him. I won't!—I *won't!*"

There was a whirl of skirts, the crash of a chair overturned, and Miss Harcourt was again alone.

"You sent for me, Lucia?"

The woman, standing with hands tightly clasped together, who had not moved as she heard the step which entered the room, turned at the sound of the voice—a voice which sent the blood leaping in quickened movement through her veins—and faced the man who stood before her.

As her glance passed swiftly over him, she realized at once how little and how much he had changed in the years since she saw him last. The lean, sinewy, well-built figure, the keen, dark face, with its clear-cut contours and deep-set eyes, were unaltered, but in his aspect, as in her own, there was that touch of the tragedy of life, of some experience which had left its ineffaceable mark on the body, as well as on the spirit, which cannot be mistaken. It was the recognition of this perhaps which made her suddenly put out her hand.

"Yes," she said, "I sent for you. There seemed—nothing else to do."

As he felt the touch of that hand, a quick softening came into Philip Darrell's eyes and he bent his head over it for an instant, as if to hide emotion. Then—

"It doesn't matter why you sent," he said. "You know I should have come, wherever I had been—from hell itself, I think. And I know something of hell. I have been through it since I held your hand like this before."

"I know." She drew the hand from him. "It was I who sent you there. I have never forgotten that."

"I have never remembered it," he told her. "You were not accountable—"

"I was accountable for all—*all*," she interrupted. "There is nothing gained by attempting to deny it. The guilt of Ralph Stannard's death rests on me rather than on you, but you have had to pay the penalty and bear the stigma. Do you think I don't realize that?—do you imagine I haven't felt it?" She looked at him with a passion of tragic meaning in her gaze. "What have I not suffered, though I have been too cowardly to cry out, as I should have done, that it was my fault—from first to last, my fault!"

"It was not your fault," he reminded her, almost harshly, "that I loved you, though I knew you were bound by your engagement to him, that I told you so, and that—"

"I listened to you!" she interrupted again. "What excuse was there for that? I acknowledged nothing to you, but I listened, and—ah, me! I felt—"

"Lucia!"

The tragic, wide-eyed glance held his.

"How inexorable life is!" she said. "How impossible it is to escape the consequences of our actions! Having listened, and having—felt, I knew that I could not marry Ralph without telling him the truth. So I told him—"

"That you did not love him?"

"That I did not love him and that I did love you. No, no!"—she drew back, as he impetuously extended his hand again—"don't forget that I am talking to you across a grave! I am telling you something which belongs to

another life. He was furious. He said that he would not demand the fulfilment of my promise, that he would not insist on my marrying him, but that he would take care that I did not marry you. I knew what he meant—who doesn't know how reckless, how violent, how dangerous to those who cross their paths the Stannards are?—and I clung to him, I even knelt to him, pleading with him, offering to marry him immediately if he wished, but he said he would not trust the woman who had ever loved Philip Darrell, and then—then—"

Philip Darrell's hands clenched and the veins stood out like whipcords on his forehead.

"Coward!" he breathed. "Thank God, I killed him!"

"Oh!" She shuddered. "Don't let me make you say such an awful thing! I knew that you were forced either to kill or be killed, and yet I was too great a coward to come forward and tell what I knew."

"Why are you so unjust to yourself?" he demanded sternly. "Do you think I forget the message you sent me, offering to testify in my defense? But I would not have allowed that, even if it had been necessary to save my life. To have you—*you*—brought into the horrible notoriety, the dreadful publicity of a criminal trial, as 'the woman in the case'—I would have died not one, but many deaths, if such a thing were possible, rather than have permitted it!"

"But did I not deserve it?" she asked. "Why should I have been spared and you been pilloried alone? What happened was more my fault than yours, for I had let you speak—"

"You could not have prevented me from speaking."

"You would never have spoken if you had not known that I—cared."

"Yes, I knew that you cared." A gleam of triumph came into the deep-set eyes. "And you care now, Lucia."

"If I do," she said very calmly, "it only prolongs the penance I have done in my heart, in the deep and bitter

loneliness of my soul since I made a grave across my path of life."

"How dare you say that you made it?"

"Who else?" Even at this moment he thought that he had never seen anything at once so beautiful and so sad as her face. "If I had been true to Ralph he would be living now."

"How could you help the wandering of your heart?"

She made a quick, contemptuous gesture.

"Have you no thought," she asked, "of the disgraceful betrayals, the forgetfulness of honor and faith, for which that saying stands! 'Prevent the heart from wandering where it should not'? Yes, we can prevent it, if we will—or, if we cannot, we can crush it. God gives us the strength for that, else we are of the same nature and of less value than beasts. Oh, I have recognized all that such weakness means in the long dark hours in which I have faced the terrible knowledge that by my fault I sent one soul, all unprepared, into eternity, and laid the stain of blood-guiltiness on my own, and in less degree on yours."

"You shall not say such things of yourself!" he cried angrily. "I killed Stannard, as I would have killed a raging animal, in self-defense, but if there is blood-guiltiness in the act it is mine and mine alone."

She shook her head.

"Because of what went before," she said, "it is shared by both of us. The only thing we shall ever share, Philip."

"Lucia!"

"You have known that." Again the dark eyes met his, clear and very sad. "I have been grateful that you have never tried to see or to communicate with me since the tragedy that set us apart."

"And will it always set us apart?" he asked hoarsely. "Can you guess how long I have desired, yet did not dare, to ask you that?"

"Men and women are strangely different," she said wonderingly. "You have wanted to ask me that and nevertheless—" She paused a moment.

"Have you no idea why I have sent for you at last?"

He looked at her wistfully.

"I thought, I dreamed," he answered, "that it might have been—"

"No!" she interrupted. "You cannot have thought or dreamed that I wanted to say anything which might not be said across the gulf that lies between us. I sent for you to beg you not to add to the guilt we have already incurred; to have pity on me, if you have none for yourself."

His gaze was startled enough now. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Don't you know what I mean?" she asked in turn. "Was not one tragedy enough that you run the risk of repeating it? Only this time it is Guy instead of Ralph Stannard who will kill or be killed, and the woman in the case is not Lucia Harcourt but Flora Wynne."

The dark blood surged into Philip Darrell's face. He made a step forward, and his hand closed almost violently over hers.

"Lucia," he said, "you cannot do me the injustice of believing that I ever for a moment thought seriously of that frivolous girl!"

"Did you not?" There was something of scorn in her glance as she regarded him. "Then the more shame to you that, without a serious thought, you have made her so certain of your seriousness that she is ready to discard the man who loves her deeply, and to whom she is engaged, and that that man swears, as his brother swore before him, to kill you!"

"Does he?" A dangerous light leaped in Darrell's eyes. "Let him try."

"Let him try!" She tore her hand from his clasp. "Oh, the brutal selfishness of men! Let him try! That you may shoot him down, or else be shot, and so bring more agony, more blood-guiltiness—Philip Darrell, I tell you, I who have the right, that you shall not do this thing!"

He bent his head. "You have," he said, "the right to order my life as you will. What do you want me to do?"

"I want you," she answered more gently, "to go away and stay away. I should ask this even if you cared for Flora Wynne—"

"I care for no woman on earth but you."

"Then for my sake—"

He stopped her by a gesture. "I would do much for your sake," he said; "anything, indeed, except leave you again to misery, loneliness and unmerited self-reproach. That I cannot do."

She stared at him with an amazement in which there seemed something of apprehension.

"You cannot leave me!" she repeated. "But that is what you *must* do, whether you stay or whether you go. You can add to my misery a thousandfold by remaining here, but you will in reality be no nearer to me than if you went to the ends of the earth."

"There you are mistaken," he answered quietly. "You have apparently no idea what it is to me even to breathe the same air with you, to catch a glimpse of you now and then, to know that you are well, and to hope—to hope, Lucia—"

"That I will ever forget that I can only take your hand over Ralph Stannard's grave?" she asked almost sternly. "No, Philip. It must be my expiation, that because I once forgot honor and faith I shall walk lonely to the end of my days. Don't pity me! Only help me—by going away."

He was sure that in all his life he had never seen anything so moving as the passionate appeal in her eyes, but it was an appeal against which he felt that he must steel himself with all his strength. For he knew that fate gave him here and now his only chance to win what he desired above all things, and to save the woman he adored from the loneliness and misery of which he had spoken.

"Lucia," he said gravely, "you may think me selfish and even brutal if you will, but I will never consent to go away again—unless you go with me."

"I!" She shrank back in terror. "Are you mad?"

"No," he answered, while she saw the square, clean-cut jaw set itself as she had often seen it before, "I have never been more sane. Will you listen to me, and let me tell you how the situation appears to me? We love each other." He paused as if to give her opportunity to deny this statement if she wished to do so, but when her silence gave assent to it he went on. "We have been divided by the act of a man whose intention was to divide us by the one means which could never be surmounted; who went out to seek me with the deliberate will of a murderer and was only prevented from killing me by the fact that I was a little quicker in pulling a trigger than he. And this being so, I ask you by what law of justice do you allow that man to accomplish his end by another means, to stand between us and ruin both our lives?"

"I have told you," she replied in a low voice. "It is an expiation."

He made an impatient gesture. "I deny that either of us was guilty of anything which demands expiation, but if we were, have we not paid in full? Did I not pay in the blasting of the career and the ambition on which I had set my heart, in the mark of Cain that in the eyes of men I must carry to the end, and in the long pain of separation from you, while you—"

Her lifted hand begged him to stop. "Don't!" she said. "Don't talk of what I have endured. No words can express what it has been, but through it all I have thought more of your ruined life than of my own, and if I could have died to help you—"

"You could never help me by dying," he interposed, "but by living— Ah, Lucia, have you no idea how you could turn all loss into gain by being brave enough to put your hand in mine and live for me?"

There was positive agony in her face as she looked at him now.

"Have you no idea," she asked, "what you are making me suffer by appeals to which there can be but one reply?"

"That again I deny," he returned.

"I deny that anything stands between us which an act of courage cannot throw aside. Don't imagine for an instant that I do not realize how great that courage must be. I know that the world believes you to have been passionately attached to Ralph Stannard, and to have mourned him inconsolably since his death. I know that for you to marry the man who killed him will cast you down from a pedestal in the eyes of your friends, will shock and outrage all those who regard conventionalities as sacred things. It was because I knew this that while I was away I looked upon our separation as hopeless—"

"It is hopeless," she murmured.

But he went on without heeding her—"I felt with you that Stannard had succeeded in putting an insurmountable barrier between us, and that I could never dare ask you to make the tremendous sacrifice which you must make in linking your life with mine. This, I repeat, I thought while I was away, and during those years I even prayed that you might forget me; but when a hunger to see—just to see—you drove me back, the first glance at your face told me that you had not forgotten, that you suffered still and would continue to suffer, and then it was that everything within me, heart, will, purpose, rose up and declared that the position was intolerable, that the dead man should no longer laugh at us from his grave, but that it would be better for you to dare all the wonder and reproach and come to me. I have only waited an opportunity to tell you this."

"Knowing all the time, as you must have known, what I should answer."

"On the contrary, I have believed that when you saw the matter as I see it, you would display a courage great enough to defy the shallow judgment of your little world."

She shook her head. "I have no such courage," she said. "I am a coward, if you like—I have been a coward all along. Therefore I beg you to have pity. Say no more, but go—go!"

"And leave you?" The man's face was set like stone. "No, Lucia, I shall never leave you again. If you will not go with me I shall stay here."

"You will stay here," she cried, "when I have told you what that will mean?—that it can have no other end than tragedy, the awful tragedy of the past enacted over again? Guy Stannard only wants an excuse to kill you."

"And, in the face of that threat, would you wish me to fly like a coward?" he asked. "Even for your sake that would be hard. Yet for your sake I might do it, if it were for your happiness, but it is not. You will lose much by going with me, Lucia, but in this world we must always balance loss and gain, and I am sure that you will gain more than you will lose. And, believing this, my resolution is fixed; I will not go, unless you go with me."

She regarded him with a sense of absolute despair, for she knew well the inflexible look on his face, the inflexible tone of his voice. To move him from his resolution was, she felt, impossible, and that being so, she was confronted with the necessity for a decision which seemed to rend her whole being in the struggle it involved. On one side stood all that up to this time had made her life, all the associations and attachments, the love and high esteem of relatives and friends, those things which have binding force in proportion to the depth and loyalty of the nature which recognizes them. She knew how entirely she would forfeit the respect of those whose opinion she valued most; how shameful, inexplicable and disgraceful her action would seem, if she united her life with that of the man who had killed her betrothed husband. But on the other side there stood the man himself, not only holding her heart, as it were, in his hand, not only drawing her by that strong attraction which God has put into the natures of men and women, but appealing most deeply by the marks of suffering written on his face, by all that he had endured through loving her, and, above and over all, by his great need of her. And between them was the shadow of the dead man who had

also loved her, and toward whom she told herself that she owed the expiation of lifelong loneliness. So strong was this last feeling, so bitter her self-reproach for the involuntary faithlessness which had led to his death, that it is not likely that any appeal of Philip Darrell, nor any cry of her own heart, would have availed to overcome it, had there not suddenly risen before her mental vision another face—the face of the boy whom she had seen a few hours before, with the same look on it which had been on Ralph Stannard's when he left her for the last time. And, remembering that look, there was not a doubt in her mind of what the end would be if Darrell did not go away. Inevitably the two men would meet, as those other two had met, and then—

She put her hands over her eyes, shuddering in very sickness and faintness of spirit, and the man watching her felt his heart melt with pity. But that pity did not weaken his resolution. Instead, he felt more strongly than ever that this was the only chance for her as for him. If he yielded now, all was at an end forever. He could never approach her, never have power to compel her to listen to him again. For her sake, therefore, even more than for his own—so certain was he that in the end gain would overbalance loss—he held with grim tenacity to his point, using relentlessly the advantage which fate had given him. But although there was no yielding in his tone, it was full of tenderness and compassion as he said:

"It is cruel to torture you like this, but I have no alternative. You must realize that in the face of Guy Stannard's threats I cannot go away unless you go with me to make a new life elsewhere. But if your courage and your love are not great enough for that sacrifice, then I will at least promise you that in case of an unavoidable en-

counter between Stannard and myself *he* will not be killed."

She dropped her hands and looked up at him with wild, dilated eyes. "That means," she gasped, "that *you*—"

"Yes," he answered calmly. "Why not? It will be a swift and honorable way to end a life which has come to have little value to me; and if, as you believe, there was guilt in what happened before, why should you be alone in making expiation for it?"

"And do you think," she cried—while in her tone rang the same horror that was in her gaze—"that I will let you stay here to be murdered? You have sufficiently expiated what was no fault of yours, and if there is no other way to end it all, to save you from death, and him from blood-guiltiness, why—I am ready to go away with you."

He had triumphed at last, but instead of exultation Darrell was conscious at this moment of a terrible pang. At what a cost he had forced the decision from her! And then suddenly his resolution broke, as a staff breaks when too much weight is bent upon it.

"Lucia," he said, "forgive me that I have thought of myself when I should have thought only of you. You shall not be compelled to do what is so bitter to you. How does it matter what men think or say of me? Nothing matters except to give you some measure of peace. I will go—go at once, and never return. You shall never suffer another pang through me."

He bent his head to kiss the hands which he took in the strong clasp of his own, but when he tried to release them, in order to go, to his surprise they held him fast.

"Philip," Lucia Harcourt said, "there can be no goodbye ever again between us. Whatever the cost, we will go away—together."



LOVE is idol talk!

THE FIDELITY OF FIFINE

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

GEORGE HENRY JENKINS stood leaning upon a parapet of the quay, staring at the river. It was that hour just before twilight when the Seine is most beautiful—its perspective veiled in blue-gray mist, its foreground a vague shimmer of lights. It did not, however, look especially beautiful to the eyes of George Henry, for he was distinctly homesick. He had been in Paris just long enough for the novelty of questionable highly-seasoned food and alien ways to have worn off, and was in that state of mind when the memory of home breakfast and home daintiness was almost unendurable. He was not, in short, feeling the much-written and talked-of spell of Paris at that moment.

George Henry was not a handsome boy, but he was muscular and broad-shouldered, with an honest, good-tempered face and that general indescribable air of "niceness" characteristic of the American boy. He was not of the type that finds a temperamental affinity with the French city. He had not found the accessible Parisian female society to his taste, and he had not as yet met the American girls in "the quarter." This afternoon he had not been successful in finding any of the boys with whom he had made friends at the Beaux Arts, and so he had wandered about alone, insufficiently amused. To himself, not being of an analytical turn, he described his state of mind as a "grouch."

After a time he noticed a French girl a few paces away engaged in the same occupation as himself, namely, gazing at the water. It was the first time he

recalled having observed a French girl interested in contemplating the beauties of nature, so he stared at her a moment curiously. He did not find her especially attractive, his taste not running to pale, heavily powdered ladies with prominent eyes, but he observed that she was young and deeply engrossed in her thoughts.

Fifine (for that was her name) was, if he had but known it, far, far more unhappy than he was. She was in fact *désespérante*. Such words as *l'amour* and *mourir* and *désolé* were repeating themselves in her brain, and before her eyes was the image of one Alphonse—pale, sparsely bearded, narrow-shouldered, large-eyed—*mon Dieu*, what eyes he had! Alphonse now never to be hers! Only a few weeks ago her parents had introduced Alphonse the beautiful to her consciousness, and she had loved at once—*passionnément*. The marriage had been discussed and then yesterday . . . was it only yesterday? they had come to her and told her that it was not to be after all. Alphonse had thrown over the proposition. "Another," the daughter of a wealthy chocolate manufacturer, had secured him. There was no hope. He was lost to her forever. And so she had slipped away—it was the first time, being a French girl of respectable family, that she had ever been out alone—she had slipped away to die. What else did life hold for her? As George Henry turned from the river with a last vision of home griddle-cakes that almost unmanned him, and started in the direction of the close little restaurant where it was his custom to dine, he heard a

loud splash. Turning to look in the direction of the sound he saw a woman struggling in the water.

He did not hesitate, of course, but did the obvious thing—pulled off his coat and boots with all possible haste, and plunged into the river. In a moment he had reached the drowning woman, and, in spite of her violent efforts to pull him under and get her own head above water, he managed to grip her securely and land her safely.

The water was cold, for the month was November, and George Henry shook himself very much after the manner of a large dog when he stood again on the bank of the river, where, to his surprise, he found himself surrounded by a large crowd which was expressing itself vehemently. He was not much at home in the French tongue, but he realized after a moment that his act was receiving a frenzied tribute of admiration. Men came up and wrung his hand. Women exclaimed loudly. Fifine came to long enough to exclaim faintly, "You, monsieur!" and give him a deep look from her dark eyes before they closed again, and a policeman made his way through the crowd, note-book in hand, to demand his name, age and address with such saccharine sweetness as George Henry had learned to associate only with the gentle Latin art of fleecing the American lamb.

While George Henry was answering the policeman's questions in a most reprehensible accent, a boy he knew pushed through the crowd of admiring spectators to his side.

"What's up, old man? In trouble?" the boy inquired anxiously.

"Nothing much," replied George Henry briefly.

"Monsieur is a hero magnificent!" exclaimed the policeman with lifted hat. "Without doubt he will receive a medal."

"Monsieur, it was a deed heroic!" murmured another Frenchman with emotion. "The people of France honor you!"

A bareheaded woman in the crowd cried out, "Oh, the beautiful boy there! And he is so young!"

And another exclaimed, "Oh, the brave youth American!"

George Henry's ears were red. "Say, let's get out of this. I want some dry clothes," he muttered.

"The heroism of monsieur will never be forgotten," remarked the policeman, bowing in impressive farewell. Then with some difficulty avoiding the crowd of hero-worshippers, George Henry and his friend found a cab and drove home.

The next afternoon George Henry sat in a room known as the workshop, which he shared with the aforementioned Gus Tyler, an American boy, who had lodgings in the same building. George Henry was busy with a drawing, Gus Tyler was struggling with the small coal fire upon which two of those dismal pieces of artificial fuel known as briquets were smoldering.

"Never saw such a grate," grumbled Gus Tyler; "put more than three coals on it and they fall out. The thing hasn't any back!"

George Henry looked up from his drawing and glanced about the room. "Say, what made us think we wanted to come here anyway!"

The room, in fact, was not such as the art-student at home pictures him or herself occupying in Paris, but it was of a type with which he or she is extremely likely to become familiar in the fulfilment of their dream. The walls were covered with a peculiarly disagreeable figured wall-paper of an inharmonious combination of dulness and brightness which did not look as if it had ever been new or clean. The painted woodwork, on the contrary, showed that it had once been white; and, in startling contrast to the dingy effect of the rest of the room, the floor was brilliantly polished in conformance with the one active impulse of the French housekeeper.

A marble mantelpiece contained the inevitable tarnished gilt clock that does not go, and two dilapidated gilt candlesticks. The table, now littered with students' miscellany, had originally been covered with a faded and spotted velvet cover which, however, George Henry had returned, together with a vast quan-

tity of dusty red cloth bed-curtains and coverings, to the concierge who had received them with mingled emotions of amazement and contempt. But then Americans, she knew, were barbarians who needed daily washings in order to keep clean.

George Henry had just begun to comment on the peculiar fact that he was hungry, although it was only two hours since dinner, when a knock came at his door and a card was brought to him by the permanently gloomy valet de chambre.

"Jules Pierre Lavallois," he read. "Who is he, I'd like to know? I don't want to see him whoever he is. I can't parley Francais and they can never talk anything else." Having relieved his mind by this protest addressed to Gus Tyler, he gave instructions to have his guest sent up. A few moments later a knock came at his door, and opening it he discovered a small blond youth with a square, downy growth upon his chin, a hat upon his head and a cane in his hand. As he entered the door without removing his hat, the French boy exclaimed, "Monsieur Shenkins?" with an intense inquiring look from one American to the other.

"I am George Jenkins," explained George Henry. Then, to his unspeakable amazement and anguish, Jules Pierre Lavallois kissed him ardently upon both cheeks, and drawing out a strongly-scented handkerchief wiped his eyes.

"My friend—it is to you we owe the life of our Fifine!" he exclaimed when he had mastered his emotion sufficiently to permit speech. "How shall we ever hope to repay the debt of gratitude!"

"Oh, that's all right," mumbled George Henry in English. "What's it all about anyhow?"

The French boy indicated with a smiling shrug that he did not understand, then burst into a torrent of eulogistic protestations upon the heroism of George Henry.

Then the identity of Jules Pierre reached the consciousness of the hero and he contrived to inquire stiffly in French, "How is your sister?"

"Ah, she is better—a small little better. She suffers, but she still lives, thanks to you, monsieur, and, we hope, she no longer desires to die." With the enunciation of this last sentence Jules Pierre removed his hat.

"What did she want to die for?" inquired George Henry, feeling a strong impulse of disgust.

A shadow fell across the face of Jules Pierre. He sighed profoundly. "*L'amour*," he replied in a low, solemn voice. "It is not possible for her to marry the one she loves."

George Henry was overcome with conflicting emotions. "Why doesn't she cut it out?" he growled in his own vocabulary. Then forced into the insincerity of polite formula by the exigencies of a limited vocabulary he ejaculated the only appropriate phrase he could recall for the moment, "Quel dommage!"

"We hope," remarked Jules Pierre gravely, "that in time she may forget." Then, his eye lighting with the fire of enthusiasm for a great deed, he again broke into hyperbolic admiration of Shorge Henry Shenkins, the preserver.

When the burden of inarticulateness and non-comprehension had become mutually oppressive, Jules Pierre rose to take his leave. While he was in the midst of this formality his eye chanced to light upon a photograph lying in a litter on the table. It was a most unesthetic likeness of George Henry in boxing costume.

"What a costume curious!" exclaimed Jules Pierre. "Is it of the theatre variety?"

"No, it's a picture of me," replied George Henry, now fatigued into English. He tapped his chest in further elucidation.

"Of monsieur!" exclaimed Jules Pierre. "Might I be permitted to examine it? It is of an interest extraordinary!"

Then, after a long scrutiny of the photograph, the brother of Fifine began to express himself fluently. He addressed himself to George Henry and in obvious tones of pleading. After a moment George Henry realized that

some favor was being asked of him, and gradually it came to him that what Jules Pierre wanted was the photograph of himself.

"It is that I desire to have a likeness of the preserver of my sister," he explained. "That I may show it to her."

Overpowered with the absurdity of having his picture, and especially that particular picture, exhibited to the suffering Fifine, yet finding no words at command in which to cope with the subtleties of the situation, George Henry was dumb. He gave an agonized glance at Gus Tyler, who studiously avoided his eye and was obliged in helpless mortification to watch Pierre carefully putting the photograph away in an inner pocket before he took his emotional leave of them.

But George Henry had not yet heard the last of his heroic deed. Later in the afternoon, much to the awe of the gloomy garcon, another gentleman, this time in uniform, inquired for Monsieur Shenkins. And when he, too, had been invited up, George Henry was obliged to listen to further eulogies of his heroism. He learned that the republic French honored him; that his name was to go down on the record of brave men; that a few days from that time he would be summoned to receive an ovation, and, eventually, a medal. It was the officer's privilege to bear the tidings.

"I don't want their old medal," complained George Henry to his friend, Gus Tyler, who had remained in order to support him at this trying moment. "I feel like all kinds of an idiot. Why can't they cut it out?"

But his protests were of no use. The republic French must and would honor him. He would receive further notification of the day and hour. Then, with profound salutations and a dramatic toss of his blue cape, the officer took his departure.

It was the second day after this that George Henry, looking out of his window which gave on the street, discovered two men in uniform standing at the outside door. He groaned aloud.

"I suppose it's that fool medal. I'd rather be kicked."

The next moment the sulky garcon announced two officers to see Monsieur Shenkins.

George Henry greeted the officers with careless camaraderie, after his American boy fashion. It was a moment before he perceived that their faces were grave. One held a paper in his hand. He fixed a piercing glance upon George Henry and twirled a long, horizontal mustache.

"It is that we desire to ask a question of monsieur," he began.

"Fire away," George Henry was moved to respond, but substituted an acquiescent "*Oui*."

"Is it that you have notified the police since your arrival in Paris?" The officer's expression and emphasis were peculiar.

"Notified the police? Notify them of what? I am not a forger or a thief," observed George Henry to Gus Tyler. But to the policeman he said, "*Non, pourquoi?*"

The officers' faces became cold and set. They exchanged significant glances and some rapid communication. "You signed no papers upon your arrival in Paris? You have not filled out the required blank?" Both officers treated George Henry to a searching glance.

"I haven't seen their old blanks. I don't know what they are talking about!" exclaimed George Henry fretfully. Then, as the officer repeated his question, he shook his head. He began to wish he had not pulled Fifine out of the Seine.

"Monsieur," announced the officer solemnly, "it is our painful duty to inform you that you are under arrest."

"Say, what kind of guff are you fellows trying to give me?" cried George Henry angrily, this time actually addressing the officer in the vernacular.

The officer understood a protest. "It is unfortunate since monsieur has done a brave deed," he observed coldly, "but when we looked up the records in order to make out the papers appertaining to the medal we discovered that monsieur

had not declared himself to the police upon his arrival in Paris."

"I tell you I didn't know anything about it," protested George Henry. "How could I? I would have done it if anyone had asked me."

"One does not wait to be asked. It is the duty of each person to declare himself," replied the Frenchman with official impersonality.

"But I tell you I didn't know anything about your old law," insisted George Henry, moving helplessly about in the circle of the Latin mind. "We haven't got any such law in America."

The officer caught the last word. "We have nothing to do with the laws of America," he replied loftily. "It is our duty to take you to the police-station."

Inside the police-station, after being led past groups of some of the most unsavory-looking individuals he ever remembered to have seen, George Henry, accompanied by the faithful Gus Tyler, was led up to an absorbed-looking official who sat at a desk making entries in a book. This dignitary did not recognize George Henry's presence until he had finished his writing, which seemed to be of the gravest import, then he looked up with an expression of expectant sternness rendered quite terrifying by the fierce length of his mustache. The officer accompanying George Henry who had done most of the talking explained the matter rapidly. When he had finished George Henry, who had been busily framing phrases of explanation, opened his mouth to speak, but the gentleman at the desk opened his first.

"You are fined five hundred francs, Monsieur Shorge Shenkins. You have violated the laws of France."

A few days later when the bitterness of this climax was as yet unsoftened, appeal to the consul having proved futile, an added indignity was heaped upon the head of George Henry Jenkins; he had a second call from Jules Pierre. The purpose, he sulkily gathered, was an invitation to dine at the Lavallois home. He caught hints, too, of delicately worded inquiries as to the

financial situation of his family. As George Henry, with a rather accented touch of American brevity, persisted in his refusal of the Lavallois hospitality, Pierre rose to go; then, at the door, with a last outburst of emotion, he turned and addressed himself to George Henry:

"I tell you out of my heart. My sister speaks of you constantly. She has your photograph upon her wall. I have fear that she may die of love for you."

"Fifine seems to be in that business," remarked Gus Tyler coarsely. Then, overcome by the most uncontrollable of American emotions, he hurriedly left the room.

"Tell your sister to take a brace," was the unchivalrous observation that rose to the lips of George Henry. Then, his feeling of resentment increasing, he was moved to add even more offensively, "Tell her to go chase herself." But what he eventually said was something intended to convey with finality the fact that he could neither love Fifine nor accept their invitation to dinner. What Jules Pierre understood was that George Henry loved "another." He departed with an air of subdued melancholy mingled with one of sympathetic understanding. And only by anticipatory manœuvres did George Henry escape a second embrace.

One day toward spring when the prospect of the hot griddle-cakes was drawing nearer and the memory of the loss of the five hundred francs was growing mercifully dim, George Henry Jenkins, now reasonably fluent with his French, found himself standing next to Jules Pierre in front of a print-shop in the rue Bonaparte. Jules Pierre greeted him enthusiastically and George Henry, with a better grace than on their previous meetings, inquired for Fifine.

"Oh, she is happy, altogether happy," replied Jules Pierre. "The chocolate manufacturer whose daughter Alphonse was to have married: has failed, so mademoiselle had no *dot*, after all, and Alphonse is engaged to Fifine. They are to be married next month."

"Good work!" rose to George

Henry's lips, but he translated it into, "Give her my best wishes."

"Ah, that monsieur might be present!" exclaimed Jules Pierre emotionally.

"Thanks very much, but I am go-

ing home," responded George Henry briskly.

"Ah, but she will have to monsieur a gratitude eternal!" replied Fifine's brother, and tears of sensibility filled his pale-blue eyes.



THE MASK

By Edward Wilbur Mason

"**L**ADY, to me thou comest now
Unwelcome and unbid;
I see the thorns upon thy brow—
Why are the roses hid?"

"Sir Knight, thou see'st with eyes of care;
Let me but touch thy sight
And thou shalt see the blossoms fair
More warm than morning bright."

"Lady, I fear thy fingers chill;
I fear thy touch of pain;
Thy thorns my soul with terrors fill
And I to weep am fain."

"Sir Knight, the thorns are but thy fears.
Yea, weep, thou foolish boy:
My roses aye are seen through tears,
For lo, my name is Joy!"



MRS. PARKER (*to husband's friend*)—You can come right in to see Mr. Parker. He's ill in bed.

FRIEND—Is it anything catching?

"That's just what we're trying to find out."

TOODLES

By Ethel Watts Mumford Grant

YOUNG Mrs. Collins raised her sunbonnetted head from the contemplation of her beloved flowers.

"There's Marjie Leland in her best lingerie gown, pushing flower-pots about the veranda. I know what that means."

Her sister smiled. "Charlie will be home this morning. Probably the chauffeur will 'make it' in ten minutes from the station. He's the most devoted man I ever saw—Charlie, not the chauffeur."

Mrs. Collins sighed as she snipped off a *gloire de dijon* rose. "Marjie is a very lucky girl." She glanced at her own vine-shrouded porch, where the white flanneled outline of her spouse appeared through the interstices of the Sunday papers. "There he comes." She laughed a little enviously. "See that cloud of dust? Let us not be spies at the tender meeting." Followed by her sister she ascended the steep graveled path to the house.

The Leland motor circled the driveway and stopped with a jerk. Marjie in "her best lingerie frock," her beautiful face pink with delight, held forth welcoming hands.

"Hello, old girl!—waiting, were you?" Her husband kissed her gently, then, raising his head, he looked about with anticipatory eyes. "Where's Toodles?"

The color faded from his wife's face. "I sent him out with Ellen," she answered slowly.

"What did you do that for, Marjie? You knew I was coming on the ten-fifteen—I nearly broke my neck to make it, too. The Chicago express

didn't get in till nine. You might have known I'd want him here to meet me."

Marjie pinned back a stray lock, her rounded arms shading the disappointment that showed too plainly in the droop of her mouth. "He'll be here presently, dear," she said. "And—tell me all about your trip. I've—I've missed you so."

"Have you, though?" he smiled. "That's sweet of you. Say, did Toodles seem to miss me at all? I suppose he's a bit young yet, hey? Cried a good deal, did he? Poor little chap! Well, he ought to know his dad." They had entered the hall, the butler following with grips and hat-box. "Jones," the master ordered, "when the baby comes in, tell Ellen to bring him straight to my room. The old place looks fine, Marjie. It's good to be home. Dear me! but it has been lonesome! Do you realize this is the first trip I've made alone since we were married?"

Did she realize! Poor Marjie's eyes filled with tears. Ah! those happy little journeys—every business trip had meant a pleasure excursion in the old days. But that was all done with. There was Toodles!

"Do you know," he continued, contemplating with delight the spotless room, and the array of summer garments spread for him upon the chintz-covered bed, "I could hardly sleep at night listening for the Kiddy's little yowl."

"And didn't you miss *me* at all, Charlie? Didn't it seem queer not to have me with you?"

"Perfectly rotten," he agreed cordially, giving her a careless squeeze.

"My! but I'll be myself again when I get a bath and change. I must hurry up and shave. Toodles mustn't have a scratchy dad, must he? Will you ring for Jones, please?"

Marjie was glad to turn away. The tears still burned in her eyes. Oh, for the old days, the deliriously happy days, when she had been all in all to her husband—his first thought, his dearest interest. A pang of bitter jealousy smote her heart. What! jealous of her own child! But, oh, if Charlie would only think of her a little; even deign to notice her new gown, or that the room had been swept and garnished for his coming.

"Any news, little girl?"

She heard the familiar question, and, glancing over her shoulder, delighted herself with his presence. It seemed to her adoring vision that no Greek athlete sculptured by a Phidias could equal the beauty of Charlie in the homely act of stropping a razor. Her heart went out to him with a leap of affection. Swiftly she crossed the room, eager and wistful.

"Marjie, dear," he exclaimed, "how many times have I told you not to touch me when I have a razor in my hand!"

"I know," she answered. "Excuse me." She turned to the open window, and stared blindly at the copper beeches glistening underneath the window. She did not move again, even when, the elaborate toilet over with, he stretched his arms and said:

"Come and kiss me, little girl."

She had heard the baby's crow and approaching footsteps in the hallway. "Come and kiss"—what for? To be turned from his arms the next instant?—no. She heard the knock, then the baby's delighted cooing, the father's pet talk, and the blarney-larded exclamations of the infatuated Ellen. For an instant she hated the child. What would she not give for that precious affection lavished on that uncomprehending little atom. If the recipient of all this love could appreciate it she might have endured the torture better. She turned from the window sick at heart. She forced herself to enter the coo-and-gurgle conversation.

At last the nurse intervened, and removed her charge for the much-needed nap.

"Ah," said Ellen to the butler as he passed her, "it's a fine b'y! and his father do be proud; but his lady's that short with the angel I can't make her out at all, at all; it's not human it is."

"Not human!" Could Marjie have heard the words the flood-gates of her tears would at last have opened. "Human!" Every fibre of her being was human, and she suffered. She loved with a complete concentration of mind and heart. She lived by her husband's affection as naturally as her body was nourished by daily food. Who would have dreamed that the baby could come between her and her beloved, to estrange him? From the very beginning of Toodles's career he had been the innocent cause of measureless sorrow and pain, a very refinement of cruelty.

The glowing Sunday somehow wore to a close. Charlie had not noticed that the luncheon was composed of his favorite dishes. Baby had sat in the curl of his arm. She heard little or nothing of his recent travels and the warming interests of transportation problems. Seemingly she had slipped from her place as friend and companion to be consulted and interested in the myriad problems of social and business affairs; seemingly she had become to him only the mother of his child. She analyzed the situation bitterly. Thank heavens, Toodles would soon be tucked away in his crib. Then under the spell of the shaded dinner candles he would come to her again as her lover and chum.

With lavish care she dressed her splendid hair and adjusted every furbelow of her smartest evening gown! No débutante preparing for her presentation to a critical world ever gave more consideration to her appearance than did Marjorie the Jealous. The reflection that surveyed her with anxious eyes from the cheval glass was lovely enough to melt a Galahad.

As she had hoped, something of the old happiness bloomed again in their

"solitude for two." Her heart was flooded with joy. But the glimpse of happiness was short-lived. Almost immediately Toodles intruded upon the conversation. "Was she satisfied that Ellen was taking proper care of the baby?" "How long had it taken Dr. Strong to reach the house when she had telephoned?" Heart-sick, she answered wearily.

"Really, Marjie," he said at length, "you seem to take jolly little interest. I—"

She held out her hand impulsively. "Oh, Charlie, I want *you*; don't you see? You've been away from me so long, and all these things I'm with all the time. If anything were wrong I would consult you— Oh! can't you understand? I'm not just a house, or your baby—I'm your wife!"

"You crazy little loon, you!" he laughed. "You never were like any other creature. I suppose that's why I love you. Come, let's go upstairs; I want to see Toodles in his crib. Come on."

She sighed and followed him. In the dim nursery they approached the crib. He slipped his arm around her and stood smiling down upon the cuddled heap of pink and white, capped by its tuft of yellow down. The man's face softened and was illumined by a wonderful tenderness. Even to Marjorie's sore heart the sight of the sleeping child brought comfort—he was so sweet, and he was her own, and Charlie's.

He drew her to him quickly. "Ah, Marjie, how can I ever thank you for giving him to me?" That was the last drop in her cup of bitterness. He cherished the giver for the sake of the gift. In spite of her angry efforts, a sob broke from her. "S-sh!" said her husband in surprise, "you'll wake him. What's the matter, dear?"

"Don't wake him!" There was the heart's cry. "What's the matter?" There was the afterthought.

Days and weeks went by and still pain and unrest held sway in Marjorie's heart; still the torture of her jealousy and of the love of that which caused it. Since her futile attempt to make her

husband understand she had remained silent, and in the silence her misery had gathered bitterness, growing out of all proportion, as sorrows will that have no vent. There were moments of hatred for which in turn she hated herself; moments of love that had in them the bitter sweet of self-abnegation. But the very strength, energy and alertness of her character drove her from that haven to protest, and from there to the dangerous consolation of self-pity.

One early autumn morning Marjorie, resolve written large in face and movement, betook herself and her troubles to that time-honored sanctuary, "her mother," who happened to be in town for a few days. That lady, a well-preserved woman, refined, and evidently quite incapable of anything save "the proper thing," calmly met her daughter's eager greeting.

"Marjie, dear, it's thoughtful of you to come in. I would have run out to you, but I simply had to see my dress-maker—and the doctor, and you know I am not strong enough to rush in and out every day."

The daughter's heart beat fast. "Yes, yes, I know, mother; but, I—wanted to see you—I want your advice—"

"Now, my dear," Mrs. Geoffrey interrupted, "I know just what it is. You remember I told you *not* to let that child go without some flannel on his body, even if it is summer. He's colicky, of course, and you are utterly at fault—!"

The girl's spirit shrank, but her need was great.

"Oh, no; Toodles is splendidly well; it isn't that—but—I'm miserable, miserable with jealousy!—I'm—"

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Geoffrey. "You don't mean to tell me that Charlie has—"

Marjorie bounded from the sofa. "No, there isn't another woman, of course not! But, oh, mother!—I'm not the same to him—it's Toodles, always Toodles—I don't exist. I can't go with him when he has to leave me; he never even suggests it any more."

"I hope not," Mrs. Geoffrey commented.

"Oh, you don't understand!" wailed Marjorie. "I can't bear it. It's making me desperate. I can't control it—I'm jealous—it's killing me!"

Mrs. Geoffrey's face became stony. That a child of hers should assume an attitude of mind so extraordinary, not to say unnatural! "If those are your feelings, Marjorie, which I sincerely hope they are *not*, I trust at least you will guard your tongue, lest people think you are insane, or worse—"

"But, mother—!" she gasped.

"When you and your brother were children," the lady continued severely, "I sacrificed myself in every way. I never left you for a moment, even when your father begged and entreated me to. When he suggested leaving you and your brother in the care of his sister, I emphatically told him that a mother's place was with her children, that her time and attention belonged to them exclusively. When he was at home I strove to interest him in the concerns of the nursery—as is right, and as I am glad to see my son-in-law seems to have realized. A mother should understand that she is a mother—a fact that this younger generation seems desirous of forgetting. So don't let me hear any more such absurd talk from you."

Marjorie wiped her eyes and rose brokenly. "I won't keep you, mother. I know you're busy, and I'm not equal to helping you shop."

Mrs. Geoffrey kissed her daughter perfunctorily. "Don't be absurd, my dear. This is all a young woman's nonsense. I'd ask you to lunch with me, but I can't tell how long Mme. Longues will keep me; I'm late for my appointment now. Goodbye, dear."

The light that glared into Marjorie's eyes as she reached the street broke into a thousand rainbow colors on her wet lashes. Absently Marjorie descended the steps of the old mansion. It was not till a shrilly sweet voice had called her name twice that she raised her head.

An old-fashioned, high swing coach was drawing up by the curb. It was driven by an ancient coachman who

was in charge of two fat, black chargers that seemed to have been taken from a Flemish tapestry. In the body of the vehicle reclined an elderly woman. Her beaked nose and shining eyes laid claim to the honorable coat of arms displayed upon the carriage panels, while her general air of queenly decrepitude well matched the whole turnout.

"Marjorie!" she called. "Dear me, child, are you deaf at your age? Look at me—seventy-eight, and as sound as a sovereign."

Marjorie sprang forward. Here, here at last, was the true guide and helper.

"Oh, Mrs. Ogden, oh, please, can I go for a little drive with you?"

"That was to be my suggestion," nodded the lady. "Come. To the park, Filkins, and don't drive fast." The last injunction was a thing superfluous. "Mrs. Geoffrey is 'de passage,' I take it, my dear, or you wouldn't be coming down the steps of a town house. When I was a girl people stayed late in the city and returned early. Now it's the other way—one proof that the world is learning a few wise things. But I'm set in my ways, I suppose, and the fifteenth of September sees me back on the Avenue. And how are you, my dear?"

With no preliminaries save an effort to soften the catch in her voice, Marjorie launched into her story. She was desperate. If comfort, counsel and sympathy were denied from this most wise and kindly woman, she must stand convicted as the victim of an abnormal, of even a criminal instinct. But the bright old eyes met hers with understanding. The white side-curls bobbed as their wearer nodded. Ah! how well she knew!

"So that's what your mother says, my dear," she began as Marjorie finished her tale of self-accusation and unhappiness. "I'm sorry I don't see it as she does. In fact, I can remember something very like those sensations in my own young life. It all came right in the end, my dear, remember that; only I had to make my dear, good John Ogden see with his own eyes that I

loved him so that I couldn't put another above him, even our own babies. Then he was flattered—dear men, they're all alike in that; they love to be paramount, Marjorie, yes, indeed. Now, tell Charlie, not when you are filled with the spirit of protest, but in some gentle hour. He doesn't realize what you mean to him, that is all; and his baby is a sort of flattery, too, you see."

Marjorie smiled at last. "Then I'm not so inhuman, you think?" she asked pitifully.

Mrs. Ogden laughed. "Dear me, no; quite the contrary. We make fetishes of all sorts of things in this world, my little girl, and some of them are most excellent and worthy deities, but they can be overworshipped. Perhaps the customary idea of the super-importance of the children is one. It has separated many a loving man and wife. My poor sister, Marjie, was an example. With the best intentions in the world she centred herself in the nursery, and no matter how much her husband needed her she couldn't leave it. So he was left very lonely—and—this is a very big and varied city, Marjie. When he died, long ago, when you were a little girl, she was considered quite a martyr; but I never thought so. He wanted a grown-up woman companion, and he grew indifferent to his children because they took her from him. He would have been devoted to them and to her, too, and she could have been a better mother and a happy wife, if she hadn't felt it necessary to sacrifice herself, and incidentally him, on the nursery altar. Ah, well! at least she was sincere."

"I can't tell you how glad I am for what you say," Marjorie exclaimed softly. "I was afraid to speak. I shocked myself quite as much as I shocked mother, you see. But you're right, Mrs. Ogden; I'll explain it all to Charlie."

"Choose your hour," said the wise counsellor.

But Marjorie, impulsive and full of hope, ventured all at the wrong moment.

Charlie returned that night tired and

ill at ease. There were tangles in his business affairs of which he saw not the end. Instinctively the thought of the cooing, cuddling body of his little son came as a consolation, the mindless little bundle of creature comfort, immeasurably removed from the toil of financial war. He was in no mood to comprehend his wife's state of mind, and he had fallen out of his old habit of wholesome hearthside confidences.

Even if she had spoken from the quick pain of spontaneous feeling, her words might have reached his heart. But blinded by the belief that he must understand, and that all would be well, she went to him with a calm statement of her feelings that only shocked him.

What! she wanted to leave the baby and go with him? She was miserable because he lavished his love upon the boy? He used bitter words.

She in turn was surprised and outraged. "But it's not unnatural!" she cried indignantly. "I love you and need your companionship. Nobody can take your place, and I can't live if you make me just a second thought!" Her beautifully worded explanation melted before her emotion. This cry of the heart might have touched him, but it was met by the wall of repulsion she had herself raised with his previous argumentative statements. She had told him that which he could only have comprehended had it penetrated his affections. Now she was too hurt to explain. There were mutual recriminations, and her answer at last was but tears—tears and dumb anger, reckless misery and resentment.

Here was a strange man in the semblance of her husband. The familiar voice spoke things that stung her very soul. In unendurable anguish she ran from him down the stairs to the door. With trembling fingers she struggled into her coat and settled her hat upon her disheveled hair. From her desk in the library she snatched her cheque-book and pushed it into her gold-mesh purse. Across the lawns to the garage she raced. By good fortune the machine stood outside, and the chauffeur

beside it, bent in consideration of the merits of a new tire.

"I want to go to the station—at once. Go out the back way," she ordered; "I don't wish to pass the house." Seating herself in the tonneau, she drew on her gloves with feverish haste. A moment later the cool breezes fanned her hot cheeks and soothed her aching eyes; but the sting of her husband's words drove her on—where, she did not pause to ask herself.

The heat of Leland's anger cooled, but only to flame up anew when he heard the departing throb of the motor engines. He vaguely imagined that the car might be bearing away his wife—but where, he neither guessed nor cared. She was not the woman he had loved so long—this creature who calmly owned her indifference, not to say hatred of her child; who demanded an impossible something, actually ignoring her motherhood. He raged at the thought, misinterpreting every word of Marjorie's pitiful plea. At least she could have no further illusions as to herself and her feelings. He flattered himself he had torn to tatters the sophistries with which she had hidden the ugliness of her soul. She had heard in pretty plain language what some people thought of such unsexed inhumanity.

The baby lay upon the bed feebly kicking. Charlie knelt down, stretched forth his arms and drew the little bundle close to his breast, resting his cheek against its fuzzy head.

"She's abandoned us, old boy," he said huskily. "Well, let her go—we have each other." But this declaration did not seem to please the tyrant, who bent himself into a rigid bow and yelled. Charlie, in spite of himself, felt a thrill of annoyance. The climax of a truly dramatic situation was ruined—a father and son alone in the twilight, the heartless mother wandering forth into the world.

The yell continued. In vain the distracted father hushed and cooed. He had encountered a persistent shrieking resistance. At last he summoned Ellen. The scene changed. With the disap-

pearance of Toodles the sounds of wailing diminished and ceased. Loneliness settled down upon him. Of course she would come back. He wondered if she could have gone to town. No, all her belongings were scattered about the room. She couldn't have gone like that, without even a handbag.

The butler tapped at the door. "Madam, dinner is served." What irony!

"In a moment, Jones," he exclaimed. He had caught sight of the lights of the returning motor as it climbed the drive—it was empty. He rushed to the veranda. What should he say? The chauffeur drew up expectantly.

"Did Mrs. Leland make her train?" he asked with an effort at indifference.

"Yes, sir; in plenty of time. I wanted to say, sir, we've got to have a new inner tube."

"All right; go ahead and get it." Charlie's brain seemed suddenly to be caught in a crushing vise. "Gone!—she had gone!—really gone!" He pulled himself together and turned to the dining-room. The exquisite appointments of the table, the service set before her chair—her empty chair—everything mocked him. He sank into his place, his face ghastly, his hands trembling.

"Jones, you may serve." His voice sounded strange. "Mrs. Leland has been called to town unexpectedly."

Never afterward could he recall anything that passed during that meal. He was conscious of the silent moving shape of Jones, and the cold contact of the whiskey and soda glass in his hand. He was beset with memories of the thousand happy hours he had known in such surroundings, tête-à-tête with Marjorie. Her adorable face seemed to smile at him above the low flower centrepiece. He expected to see her white arm and slender hand steal toward him, till he stretched forth his hand to meet hers half-way down the table. But she was no longer there. What horrible catastrophe had happened? Life without her was not worth living.

Toodles was erased from his mind.

A flash of comprehension illumined his night. Ah! that was it! She had needed him as he was needing her, and he had withdrawn himself from her, selfishly lavishing his life on the baby. No wonder she had rebelled! With what bitter injustice he had met her pathetic effort to win him back! Ah, she was right to go. She had taught him through this desperate loneliness what her own sufferings had been. He must go to her; bring her back. But where was she? In her pain and resentment to whom had she gone? Ah! if he only knew.

He pushed back his chair and tried to enjoy his cigar. He would walk. Hatless and coatless he went out into the night.

Oh! if he only knew where to reach her—how quickly he would make amends. Very late he returned to his darkened home. But not to sleep.

The morning found him wan, but determined. Ellen brought the baby to his bedside as usual.

"Ah, little man," said his father gently, "did you ever hear the cry 'Down with Tyrants?' Well, you're going to be deposed. I love you, little man, but you'll never be your mother if you live a thousand years."

The baby cooed. He was apparently determined to be particularly endearing. His father held him at arm's length, regarding his pink chubbiness intently. From the stirred depths of his mind slowly rose a renewal of indignation. The woman who could abandon such a child must be a brute—and the woman who had left him was Marjorie, sweet Marjie, his own wife! He swore under his breath and caught the baby to his heart. As Ellen reappeared to take her charge, Charlie caught a glimpse of the motor waiting before the door and realized that it was late. He must drive into the maelstrom of business; for whatever happens in the home, the sweep of the world's great currents tarry for no man, and the future of Toodles as well as his present necessities must be provided for. He jumped into the car and was whirled to the station.

"Am I to call for Mrs. Leland?" inquired the chauffeur.

Charlie turned away.

"I don't know when she will be back," he answered when he was able, to control his voice. "She will telephone, I suppose. Her—her mother is not well, and I don't know how long she may be detained. The 5:30 for me as usual—that's all."

Sick at heart he boarded the train that, a moment later, drew up before the platform. He bowed perfunctorily to the greetings of many of his fellow passengers—neighbors and friends of the country colony. He was filled with dread lest they inquire for his wife; send her messages, and reminders of engagements never to be fulfilled.

Once in his office, he told himself, he could lose this oppression; he would concentrate upon his work. But all the weary, care-laden day, he struggled with but one thought—"Where was she?—where was she? Could she, in this moment of madness, have taken her own life?" This thought came to him as he vainly pored over important despatches. The papers fell from his hands and he started to his feet with a smothered cry.

"What's the matter, Mr. Leland?" exclaimed the stenographer, raising her eyes from her notes. "Are you ill? Can I get you anything?"

Charlie collapsed into his chair. "No," he answered dully; "it's nothing—a twinge of rheumatism, I think."

From that moment he was haunted. The vision of her dead face stared at him from every side. Work was impossible. At last the lagging clock hands pointed to the hour of his release, and hope dawned anew. She would be home by now. She must have repented of her rashness and come back to the one love and the one home in the world for her. Yet why should she? With burning shame he recalled the words he had said to her, and now that he understood her feelings he realized all their dreadful import.

He rushed for his train, arrived

twenty minutes too early, and walked the station floor like a madman.

She *must, must, must* have come back! She must be there to meet him!

The short run seemed hours long, but at last he arrived. There stood the motor waiting; but no veil-shrouded lady sat in the tonneau to greet him. His heart fell. He did not dare to question the chauffeur; it would have been an admission of his inability to communicate with his wife. They reached the house at last. There, under a tree on the lawn, sat Ellen, knitting as usual, while Toodles, in his white wicker carriage, slept the sleep of the uncomprehending. Charlie did not run to him at once as was his wont. Instead, with trepidation he opened the door and ascended at once to his room.

The house was silent. It was balefully in order, as if after a death. Marjorie's presence always created a delightful living disorder, as of many charming things thought and done—flowers of all sorts everywhere, open books and magazines, bits of gay fancy work, the writing-desk overflowing with smart little notes and invitations. The contrast chilled him to the heart. Ah, the loneliness—the loneliness! She was not there, with that great, warm, enfolding love that met and caressed him in a thousand emanations of perfect understanding.

Black despair seized upon him. He had not realized how he had counted upon her return, how that never for a moment had he doubted that she would be there; and again the dreadful thought that—something—something might have happened, crushed him down. He threw himself upon the bed, clasping her pillow—the dainty, frilled affair, with her monogram and embroidered garlands, and wept difficult, scalding tears, wrung from the very depths of suffering.

Through the isolation of his misery broke a sharp, insistent call—the ring

of the telephone bell. He sprang up. Perhaps—perhaps— He took down the receiver, and his hand trembled.

"Yes—yes—Mrs. Ogden—"

"Your wife isn't very well, Charlie," came the sweet old voice. "She had better stay with me—nothing serious, but perhaps you might get your Aunt Westbrook to stay with the baby for a few days—sort of nervous breakdown—couldn't you manage a little change of air for her? No—she doesn't know I'm telephoning— You'll come right away, of course— Goodbye."

Ah, the dear, good friend of the silver curls! Aunt Westbrook! An inspiration!—a telegram would bring her. The relief he experienced was an exaltation. The world was real again, not a nightmare!

"Jones," he ordered, "pack my largest grip. Tell Margaret to get Mrs. Leland's things together in the traveling case. Put out her long coat—I'll carry it over my arm."

The baby, in his nurse's arms, cooed as he came up the stairs.

"Bye, little Tyrant," laughed his father. "Boss your great-aunt all you please when she comes. Kiss father—there; and, Ellen, Mrs. Westbrook will be here for a while. I am taking Mrs. Leland for a trip."

Ten days later the harvest moon had reached its full and shone with mellow radiance on the great river in the far distance, and the crowded, quaint roofs of old Quebec. Marjorie, clinging to her husband's arm, looked out over the enchanted scene and gave a sigh of supreme content. He pressed her hand against his cheek. She sighed again—a trifle wistfully.

"What's the matter, little girl?" he asked tenderly. "Aren't you happy?"

"Happy!" Her tone was a sufficient answer. "But," she murmured, "do you know—I think—I'm just a little bit homesick for—Toodles!"



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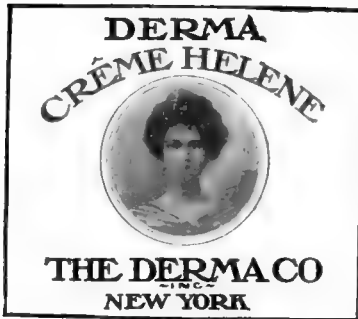
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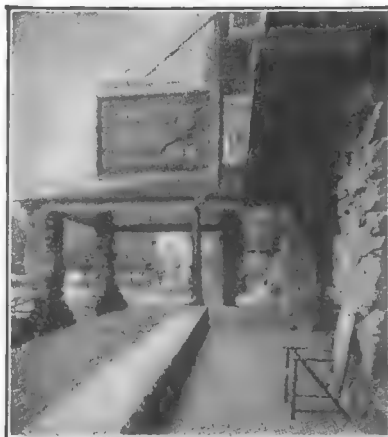
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